

Feb 8 declared public holiday
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan has declared February 8 (Thursday), the day the nation goes to poll for general elections, a public holiday nationwide. The election commission has also issued a notification for the holiday on Thursday, February 8. A maximum number of people will be able to exercise their right to vote due to the public holiday.



@thefrontierpost

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

www.thefrontierpost.com

Vol. XXXIXI

No. 11

Regd. No. 241

RAJAB 21 1445 -- FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 02 2024

PESHAWAR EDITION

12 PAGES

PRICE. 30

Elections 2024 to be held on time: CEC

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja has said the electoral watchdog is "fully prepared" for polls on February 8.

According to a statement released after a high-level moot called by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to overview the security situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, CEC Raja said elements disrupting the law and order situation will be strictly dealt with by law enforcement agencies and Pakistan Army.

"In this regard, no leniency will be shown to anyone," he was quoted as saying in the statement. During the meeting, which was attended by intelligence officials and the caretaker interior minister among others, the CEC raised concerns over recent attacks on election offices and rallies in KP and Balochistan.

The CEC clarified that the electoral process will not halt despite these security challenges. "Elections will be held on time and there should be no doubts on that," the ECP statement

said. Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja has said all measures would be taken to ensure the peaceful conduct of elections and urged political parties to continue canvassing without any fear.

According to a statement released by the Election Commission of Pakistan, CEC Raja termed terrorism the "biggest enemy" of the electoral process. But at the same time, he expressed full confidence in law enforcement agencies. He also urged the LEAs to remain alert for any potential law and order situation during the counting of votes and announcement of results.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has taken notice of the promotion of development projects by the caretaker governments and sought a report from the chief secretaries of the four provinces, APP reports. The caretaker governments were running campaigns in the form of advertisements for development projects, which was likely to affect the conduct of fair and transparent elections, the spokesperson of ECP told media.

Quoting an example, he

said that the 'Green Bus Service' campaign in Sindh was being carried out, and clarified that caretaker governments were bound to work within the law. The ECP issued a letter directing the caretaker governments to stop advertising any development projects until the general elections are conducted peacefully. Meanwhile, the police chiefs of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan have apprised the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) of measures taken to deal with security threats in the provinces. During a high-level moot, the chief secretary and inspector general of Balochistan said law enforcement agencies and provincial administration were on alert, according to an ECP statement.

They also shared details of the operations underway in Balochistan against terrorists. They affirmed that no "political or nonpolitical powers" would be allowed to interfere in the electoral process. Meanwhile, officials of KP informed the ECP about the measures taken and said all facilities had been provided to LEAs in the province.

PTI to hold intra-party polls on 5th

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Thursday announced to hold its intra-party elections on February 5. The intra-party elections scheduled was released by Federal Election Commissioner Raoof Hassan on PTI's official X account.

On Dec 22, the electoral watchdog stripped Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) of its electoral symbol 'bat' symbol in a decision on founding member Akbar S. Babar's petition challenging the intra-party elections to be in line with the rules. Following the decision, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) moved to Peshawar High Court, from where it got temporary relief as the decision of the electoral body was nullified, but it did not last for long, as the ECP filed a review on the decision, which was accepted by the two-member bench of PHC. Later, PTI challenged the decision of the Peshawar High Court in the Supreme Court, but the court also upheld the decision of the high court.

Court puts off Elahi's indictment

F.P. Report

LAHORE: An accountability court (AC) in Lahore on Thursday put off the indictment of former Punjab chief minister and PTI President Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi and others in the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) reference of receiving billions of rupees in kickbacks in development projects until February 14.

Earlier during the hearing, copies of challan were distributed among the suspects. Before that, the judge ordered the production of Elahi, Muhammad Khan Bhatti and others in the court for indictment, saying they would all be indicted in the case today come what may.

"I have received a letter which says that the PTI president is presently on bed rest. The fact is that doctors and the paramedical staff are hands in gloves with the suspects," the judge said, and asked where the jail superintendent was whom he had issued a show-cause notice. The court then adjourned the case's hearing until February 14.

PPP imposed on Pakistan: JI

F.P. Report

LARKANA: Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Sindh Emir Mohammad Hussain Mehtti said that Pakistan People's Party has been imposing on the country and Sindh since 1970. Bribery has been made common in the country, but especially in Sindh, jobs are being given due to bribery, due to which the provision of justice has been left behind.

This he blamed while addressing a press conference at Larkana press club and that why we want to close the market of bribery in the entire country, to free the people from all the problems they are facing including bribery in all departments including the revenue department. Instead of going backwards due to which today the dollar has reached 282 rupees in the country by imposing 18% tax on food and drink, the prices of everything have been increased.

About 33 lakh children have been deprived of education, he claimed. The people in Sindh are being oppressed by the Pakistan People's Party. They are being harassed for the elections. And for the 61 seats of the National Assembly, tickets have been issued to the candidates for 51 of the 61 seats, he added that no other party has done as much as the MQM has oppressed the people because there are bodies in sacks in Karachi.



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

PM directs action against drug smugglers

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Thursday directed to improve the performance of the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) and accelerate action against drug smugglers and hoarders.

Chairing a meeting of the Federal Cabinet, the prime minister instructed to compile the recommendations for necessary legislation regarding the deregulation of drug prices and its onward presentation before the Parliament by the next elected government. Addressing the cabinet meeting, he said the government was taking all possible steps to provide medicines to the common man at reasonable prices.

He further said the government was framing such policies which would benefit the common man and also help develop the pharmaceutical industry. The cabinet approved the increase in the prices of 146 essential life-saving medicines, keeping in view the rising prices of their raw material in the global market under the hardship category.

The meeting was informed by the Ministry of National Health Services and DRAP that through the online portal of the Authority, citizens could file complaints regarding the non-availability of medicines in the market. On the recommendation of the Ministry of Finance, the cabinet approved the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the Competition Commission of Pakistan and the State Administration of Market Regulation (SAMR) China. Under the MOU, exchange of information and technical capacity would increase between the two countries.

The cabinet, on the recommendation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, allowed renowned Pakistani psychologist Muhammad Saleem Khan Tareen to receive the award of Member of the British Empire from King Charles (III), in honour of his services in the field of psychology. It also allowed Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu to receive the Gold Medal for Aeronautical Merit awarded by Italy, in recognition of his services for the increased cooperation between the air forces of the two countries.

The cabinet approved the decisions taken in the meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Energy (CCOE) held on January 26, besides endorsing the decisions of the Cabinet Committee on Legislative Cases taken on January 26 and

Imran to be held accountable: Nawaz

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: Pakistan Muslim League N Supremo Muhammad Nawaz Sharif said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had been deceived in the name of change during last 10 years rule of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and vowed to remove sense of the deprivation of its people. He said that PTI founder must be held accountable for his actions. Addressing the public gathering here at Grassi Ground in Mingora, the three-time prime minister lambasted the PTI founder, saying,

Reiterating to bring positive socioeconomic changes in lives of people of KP, Nawaz Sharif said that people of KP was trapped in the name of change and were deprived of development. He said that all sectors in KP were badly affected by poor governance of the PTI Government.

PML-N Supremo said neither the promises of construction of 350 dams were completed nor five million houses and 10 million jobs were constructed and provided and oppressed where are 10 billion trees. Nawaz Sharif said during his Government there was no load shedding and peace was brought to Swat besides price hike was arrested.

Nawaz Sharif said that his party would expedite pace of economic development if vote to power and will arrest price hike and inflation. He asked electorates to exercise their right of votes wisely and

elect honest and committed leadership on February 8, 2024. He asked, why a person [PTI founder] was given the permission to harm the country?" "The country had to bear the brunt of questing Naya Pakistan. One person had been exported throughout the country from the country," Nawaz Sharif said.

Sharif also accused the PTI government of neglecting infrastructure projects, specifically asking the public where were 300 promised dams were. He asserted that during his tenure, load shedding was eliminated from the country, contrasting it with the current situation where electricity and gas prices have escalated significantly with long hours of load shedding in KP and other parts of the country.

While addressing the gathering Maryam Nawaz extended greetings to the people of the Malakand division, expressing gratitude for the overwhelming turnout in Swat. She noted the significance of Nawaz Sharif's presence at the gathering, contrasting it with his previous attendance from London. She pointed out the hypocrisy of the PTI leader, highlighting, "while his own children resided in London, the youth of KP were incarcerated and facing difficulties."

Addressing the challenges faced by the PML-N, Maryam Nawaz highlighted the resilience of Nawaz Sharif amidst adversity, emphasizing his continuous dedication to the country's

betterment despite facing obstacles. She called out those responsible for initiating legal proceedings against Nawaz Sharif, asserting that their attempts to discredit him have ultimately failed.

Maryam Nawaz underscored Nawaz Sharif's unwavering commitment to serving the nation, even amidst personal trials. Regarding the political landscape in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), she criticized the previous government's lack of tangible progress despite a decade in power. "Where are the opposition of Nawaz Sharif? Where are they who had claimed that Nawaz Sharif would never be able to return to politics?" she asked.

Maryam Nawaz emphasized her refusal to accept special treatment while incarcerated, highlighting his principled stance of refusing privileges in prison. Concluding her address, Maryam Nawaz urged voters to consider the significance of their vote in the upcoming February 8 elections, framing it as a pivotal decision affecting the future of their children and the nation.

Earlier PML-N provincial president Amir Muqam made a warm welcome to Nawaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz and expressed support for Sharif's leadership and urged voters in Malakand division to vote for PML-N in the upcoming elections on February 8. Muqam expressed confidence in Sharif's ability to lead the country as prime minister once again.

Terrorist ring leader killed
F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Security forces conducted an intelligence based operation in Dera Ismail Khan District, on reported presence of terrorists. During the conduct of operation, intense fire exchange took place between own troops and terrorists as a result of which HVT terrorist ring leader Ashraf Sheikh and Terrorist Burhan Ullah were sent to hell.

15 political figures of KP receive threats

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a concerning development, reports from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa indicate that 15 prominent political figures have received severe threats from militant groups, as per sources from the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD).

The CTD in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has compiled a list of political figures who have been received threats, including former National Assembly member Mohsin Dawar, former Provincial Minister Itfikh Qureshi, and Senator Hidayatullah. The list also includes former National Assembly member Amir Maqam of PML-N, PTI leader Pervaz Masood Shah, and Shah Mohammad.

Notably, threats have been directed towards JUI-F's Adnan Wazir and Ehsanullah, as well as Senators Bukhari Afsar and Maulana Abdul Rashid. The CTD has alerted the police in all relevant districts about the threats, prompting increased security measures for the safety of these political figures.

The security forces are taking these threats seriously, and the police in the respective districts have been instructed to enhance security for the mentioned political personalities. The situation is being closely monitored, and law enforcement agencies are on high alert to prevent any untoward incidents.

These developments raise concerns about the safety and security of political figures in the region, especially in the lead-up to the 2024 elections. The authorities are urged to take swift and effective measures to ensure the protection of these individuals and maintain the integrity of the democratic process.

Taliban reject UN team's report

KABUL (AFP): Afghanistan's Taliban government rejected on Thursday a recent UN Security Council report claiming that new Al-Qaeda training centers have been established on its soil.

The report was released this week by a UNSC committee pursuant to resolutions concerning Daesh, Al-Qaeda and associated individuals. It was based on assessments by the UN sanctions monitoring team, which cites intelligence provided by member states to warn that Al-Qaeda "was reported to have established up to eight new training camps in Afghanistan" and that it "maintains safe houses to facilitate the movement between Afghanistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran."

The report also said that Al-Qaeda maintained a "holding pattern in Afghanistan under Taliban patronage." Taliban chief spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said in a statement that the allegation was "false" and a part of "propaganda" by the countries that supported Afghanistan's previous pro-US administration.

"There is no one related to Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, nor does the Islamic Emirate allow anyone to use the territory of Afghanistan against others," he said. The UN sanctions team found that a regional affiliate of Daesh — known as Islamic State Khorasan Province, or ISIS-K — remained the "greatest threat within Afghanistan," while there was an observed strengthening of the TTP.

1 killed in Quetta blast

F.P. Report

QUETTA: One person was killed in a blast on Quetta's CPEC road on Thursday, police said. SSP Operations Tariq Jawad told media that around eight to 10 kilograms of explosives were used in the blast. He said that further investigations were under way to ascertain the identity of the deceased.

He said that initial investigation showed that the

deceased was a pedestrian passing by when the blast occurred.

"There was no election programme within the vicinity of the blast," SSP Tariq said. "Security is high alert for election gatherings," he said. A day earlier, a leader of a political party was killed and eight other people, including political workers and two security officials, were injured in separate attacks at election

offices and residences of the political party candidates in Balochistan.

Officials said that a local Awami National Party (ANP) leader, identified as Zahoor Ahmed, was killed when armed assailants opened fire at the election office of party candidate Engineer Zamrak Khan Piralizai in the Mazaiadha area of Chaman, a district bordering Afghanistan.



QUETTA: Security personnel inspecting the site of a bomb blast.

Security put on high alert in Karachi

KARACHI (APP): Additional Inspector General of Police - Karachi Khadim Hussain Rind on Thursday, heightened the city's security measures.

He instructed the police force to be vigilant and diligent, especially in light of recent explosions in Balochistan.

The Karachi Police spokesperson stated that Rind emphasized the importance of strict security protocols, including increased intelligence gathering in sensitive areas such as mosques, Madrassas, and Imam Bargahs.

He also urged for enhanced coordination among police stations, intensified patrolling, setting up checkpoints, and implementing random snap checks. District and zonal police officers were issued directives to ensure these measures are robust and effective.

Two arrested for illegal currency exchange

LAHORE (APP): The Federal investigation Agency (FIA) on Thursday arrested two accused involved in illegal currency exchange and Hawala transactions.

According to a spokesperson for the agency, operations are underway against individuals involved in illegal currency exchange and the FIA apprehended Orangzeb and Shahid Habib from Shah Alm Market and Moulan Shoukat Ali Road.

The agency officials also recovered Rs 1.8 million, laptops and mobile phones besides documents related to hawala transactions. Separate cases have been registered besides starting investigation.

“Ride for Change Program” relaunched

LAHORE (APP): Lahore traffic police has re-initiated the “Ride for Change Programme” for women especially students by introducing scooter training in various universities and colleges. Under the programme, female students are receiving training in car driving, electrical, and mechanical skills. Female students are being imparted free motorcycle training through “Women on Wheels Project”, aiming to make them self-reliant, said by Ammara Athar, the Chief Traffic Officer, in a statement issued, here on Thursday.

The goal of the traffic police was to empower women, fostering increased confidence and autonomy, through “Women on Wheels Project” and “Ride For Change Programme” as the role of women was crucial for social and societal progress, she added.

Ammara revealed that it would be the 78th batch of female students which would be given training in Women on Wheel School LOS while over 7,000 women have been trained so far, marking a positive step towards societal transformation.

Rickshaw driver arrested

LAHORE (APP): During a timely operation at 15 Call, Punjab Safe Cities Authority (PSCA) apprehended a rickshaw driver involved in stealing a woman's belongings.

According to a spokesperson of the PSCA, a woman hired a rickshaw from MM Alam Road, Hussain Chowk. Near Ichhra, the woman unloaded her belongings and went home. Taking advantage of the situation, the rickshaw driver fled with the remaining items, including a laptop. The Safe City team traced the route of the rickshaw and apprehended the driver. Details of the rickshaw involved in the theft, along with video footage and images, were provided to the investigation officer.

The spokesperson for Safe Cities stated that Ichhra Police, during their operation, arrested the rickshaw driver and recovered the stolen items. The affected woman expressed her gratitude to Safe City and the police. Citizens are urged to immediately report any violations of the law around them on 15.



KARACHI: Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori signs after approval of Registration (Sindh Amendment) Ordinance 2024 at Governor House. —APP Photo

DG Rangers leads strategic meeting to election security

KARACHI (APP): In a significant development aimed at fortifying security measures for the upcoming general elections in the city, a high-level meeting was convened at the headquarters of Pakistan Rangers Sindh under the chairmanship of DG Rangers Sindh Major General Azhar Waqas.

The meeting, attended by a constellation of key stakeholders including IG Police, Provincial Election Commissioner Sindh, Additional IGP Karachi, and senior officials from various sensitive institutions, delved into a comprehensive review of security arrangements for the impending electoral

process across the province.

Central to the discussions was the approval of a meticulously crafted plan of action designed to bolster security protocols during the general elections. It was unanimously decided that the joint flag march and snap-checking operations conducted by Rangers and Police would be substantially intensified to ensure security at entry and exit routes. Additionally, Sindh Rangers troops were earmarked to serve as a swift response force, ready to address any emergent security concerns.

The meeting also underscored the imperative of strict adherence to

directives issued by the provincial government and the Election Commission of Pakistan regarding electoral conduct.

Emphasizing the need for unwavering compliance with existing laws and codes of conduct, attendees resolved to swiftly mete out disciplinary measures against any individuals found in contravention of these regulations.

With the looming specter of electoral proceedings, the collaborative efforts of law enforcement agencies signal a concerted commitment to safeguarding the democratic process and fostering an environment conducive to free and fair elections in Karachi.

General Elections Media houses gear up for comprehensive coverage

KARACHI (APP): As the country gears up for its upcoming general election on February 8th, media houses across the nation are preparing to provide extensive coverage while adhering to the strict code of conduct issued by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

Leading news channels and newspapers have outlined their plans to ensure fair and unbiased reporting during this crucial electoral process.

Speaking on behalf of PTV News, senior journalist Noman Shabbir emphasized the importance of upholding journalistic integrity. “Our team is committed to providing viewers with accurate and timely information, while also

respecting the guidelines set forth by the ECP,” he stated.

Noman Shabbir emphasized the crucial nature of reporting elections, urging fellow journalists to exercise caution, especially when delivering election results.

Similarly, “Daily Pak Karachi,” a Sindhi newspaper, expressed its dedication to upholding the highest standards of journalism. Editor-in-chief, Ghulam Nabi Chandio, assured readers that the publication would cover the election with impartiality and professionalism. “The public relies on us to deliver unbiased news, and we take that responsibility very seriously,” Chandio affirmed.

Reflecting on their past experiences covering elections, seasoned journalists

shared insights into the challenges and rewards of such endeavors. “Elections are a test of our journalistic ethics and commitment to the truth,” remarked senior reporter of the APP, Syed Karam Ali Shah. “Media outlets must maintain credibility and avoid sensationalism, especially during this critical time,” he added.

As the nation awaits the outcome of the general election, citizens can expect comprehensive coverage from media outlets dedicated to upholding the principles of democracy and journalistic integrity. With the collective efforts of journalists and media organizations, the public can stay informed and engaged throughout the electoral process.

Light rain washes city, subsides smoggy/foggy conditions

LAHORE (APP): The city amidst its ongoing struggle against smog and elevated pollution levels witnessed a substantial transformation in its atmospheric conditions as early morning light showers blanketed the city, resulting in a noteworthy decline in air pollution.

The morning rain swiftly altered the city's skyline, introducing clearer and fresher air to the environment. The city experienced a positive shift in rankings after the rainfall, significantly improving its standing.

Rainfall covered a wide range of areas, including Airport, Gulberg, Garden Town, Iqbal Town, Multan Road, Thokar Niaz Baig, Jail Road, Mall Road, Johar Town, Canal Road, and Raiwind Road while the intensity of rain varied, ranging from light downpours to drizzle.

The weather, following the rain, turned pleasantly cool, providing a respite from the usual smoggy and polluted air that had enveloped Lahore in recent days. This collective impact not only led to reduced pollution levels but also brought relief to residents, granting them a much-needed break from the persistent smog.

“More light to moderate rain is expected in Pothohar region, Mandi Bahauddin, Mianwali, Khushab, Sargodha, Gujrat, Gujranwala, Hafizabad, Faisalabad, Jhang, Sialkot, Narowal, Lahore, Kasur, Sahiwal and Okara on Saturday and Sunday while in Multan, Bhakkar, Layyah, Bahawalpur, Bahawalnagar, Dera Ghazi Khan and Rahimyar Khan on Friday and Saturday with occasional gusts”, said a weather report issued by the Pakistan Meteorological Department.

DMOs continue action for implementation of election code of conduct

LAHORE (APP): The district monitoring officers (DMOs) in Punjab continued action on Thursday to ensure implementation of the code of conduct, issued by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), for general election.

As per a spokesperson for the Provincial Election Commissioner Punjab, the DMO Muzaffargarh imposed Rs 50,000 fine on Jamshed Dasti, a candidate from NA-175, over violation of the code of conduct. The candidate had been ordered to deposit the fine amount in the government treasury by February 2. Jamshed Dasti was fined over holding a car

rally without permission.

The DMO Muzaffargarh also imposed Rs 10,000 fine on Jam Muhammad Younus, a candidate from PP-268, over displaying advertisement material against rules. The candidate had been ordered to deposit the fine in the government treasury by February 2.

The DMO Khanewal ordered Chaudhry Ziaur Rehman, a candidate from PP-209, to pay a fine of Rs 50,000 for jubilant firing. The candidate had been instructed to deposit the fine in the exchequer immediately.

The DMO Khushab ordered Muhammad Akhlaq Awan, the supporter of a can-

didate from PP-81, to pay a Rs 10,000 fine for violating Para 41 of the Code of Conduct, which says that candidates, their election agents or supporters should refrain from making inflammatory speeches during election campaigns.

The DMO Toba Tek Singh issued a notice to Chaudhry Khushi Muhammad, a candidate from NA-107, for displaying an oversized panaflex and summoned him for an explanation. The DMO Multan issued warnings and notices to 13 candidates including Sagheer Ahmed, Yusuf Raza Gilani and Abdul Ghaffar Dogar.

Course on amendments-enactments in HR laws conducted

KARACHI (PPI): The Sindh Human Rights Commission (SHRC) and the Sindh Police Training Wing conducted a two-day specialized course on the latest amendments and enactments in human rights laws, with a focus on women and children.

According to a statement on Thursday, the training, held at the School of Finance and IT, Central Police Office, targeted newly appointed Probationary Inspectors Law, divided into two groups on January 29-30 and January 31-February 1. The goal is to enhance the legal system's fairness and justice in Sindh.

Inspector General Riffat Mukhtar,

the Chief Guest at the initial session's closing ceremony, emphasized the challenging journey ahead for Inspectors Law. In his address, he highlighted the significance of their roles, the power and responsibility they hold, and the importance of upholding justice. The IG stressed that their commitment and dedication to justice will shape the future. DIG Sharjeel Kharal, DIGP Training Faizullah Korejo, and the Secretary of the Human Rights Department Tahseen Fatima also attended, providing valuable insights and contributions to the training.

Shariq Ahmed, Secretary of the Labour & Human Resource depart-

ment, served as the chief guest at the second group training. He highlighted the crucial role of the labour department and emphasized the significance of police law inspectors as pillars of investigation. DIGP Training Faizullah Korejo and Zulfikar Maher, DIG Finance Sindh Police, also attended. Abdullah Dayo, Programme Coordinator and Advisor at Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Pakistan Office discussed labor rights and potential future collaborations.

The Chief Guests and the speakers distributed certificates to participants, and distinguished speakers received Shields as tokens of acknowledgment at the end of the session.

Over 2.14 million voters to elect 4 MNAs, 9 MPAs in Karachi

KARACHI (APP): Over 2.14 million registered voters in Karachi's Central district will elect four National Assembly members and nine legislators of provincial Assembly of Sindh on February 08 general elections. According to data released by the Election Commission of Pakistan, after current digital census, the Central district is one of the largest district Central Karachi division where one more NA and PA seats have been increased due to the rising population. National Assembly constituencies NA 247, NA 248, NA 249 and NA 250 fall in the district Central Karachi having total number of voter 2144926.

The hundreds of candidates belonging to (MQM-P), Jammāt-e-Islami(JI), Pakistan People's party (PPP), Tahreek e Labaiki Pakistan (TLP) and the independent candidates were vying for NA and PA seats. Out of 2144926 eligible voters

almost 50 percent each male and female voters will exercise right of franchise in the general polls.

The Election Commission of Pakistan with the help of Caretaker provincial government, Sindh Police, Rangers and law enforcing agencies have adopted administrative and security arrangements for smooth conduct of General elections.

The District Returning Officer/Deputy Commissioner Fuad Ghaffar Soomro has said all required arrangements were made for holding of the general polls and strict action will be taken against violation of ECP's code of conduct.

He said all government organizations including district administration, Police, Rangers, Local Government department and other institutions will provide support to Election Commission of Pakistan for conducting free, fair and transparent general polls on February 08, 2024.

Punjab to purchase 32,000 cameras for election monitoring

LAHORE (PPI): Punjab Cabinet on Thursday approved funds to purchase 32,000 cameras for election monitoring as per directions of Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

The approval was given during the Cabinet meeting held in Lahore today under the chairmanship of Caretaker Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi. The cabinet gave approval to transfer land for construction of smart police stations in various districts of Punjab.

The meeting also approved a new grant formula for Trust Hospitals under the Health Facilitation Programme and also approved amendments in Punjab Drugs Rules 2007.

It may be noted that the Punjab government has released a budget of some Rs4.1 billion to all 40 districts' deputy commissioners to ensure final arrangements for the holding of general elections on Feb 8.

The arrangements have also been completed for installing CCTV cameras at the highly sensitive polling stations across the province. The government is also imposing a ban on the display of arms and aerial firing from Feb 1 to 12 to ensure maintenance of law and order. The imposition of section 144 in this regard will be notified. The government also instructed that the violators of the election code of conduct should be punished.

Int’l Punjabi Conference on Culture held

LAHORE (APP): Dyal Singh Library organized a two-day International Punjabi Conference on Culture, here on Thursday. Fakhar Zaman, Chairman World Punjabi Congress, presided over the conference while a number of international delegates from Canada also attended it. Fakhar Zaman in his address said that Punjabi movement will be successful only when the first ever Punjabi University is established in Lahore and that Punjabi is taught at the primary level. He said that bureaucracy is a stumbling block in the way of establishing Punjabi University and making Punjabi a medium of education at primary level.



PAF BASE, PESHAWAR

TENDER NOTICE : SPORTS EQUIPMENTS

PAF Base requires “Purchase of different Sports equipments like Cricket, Football, Hockey, Badminton, Squash, Tennis, Volleyball, Athletics, Shooting, Golf, Boxing, Ski, Cross Fit, Basketball, Open Air Gym and Indoor Gym equipments / machines for financial year 2024-25”. Last date for submission of tender applications is **19 FEB, 2024**, at 1000 Hrs. Tenders will be opened on the same day, at 1100 Hrs. Any Tender application may be rejected on technical grounds.

Note: Quotation may be sent in favour of Sports Officer, PAF Base, Peshawar. Detail specification may be obtained on Tel No: 091-9505031-5215, Mobile: 03211002120



PAKISTAN AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

SITUATION VACANT

Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC), an apex research organization in the agriculture sector invites applications from well qualified, highly talented and self motivated Pakistani nationals for appointment against the following post.

| Sl. | Post / SPS / Age / Vacancies | Qualification / Experience & other requirements |
|-----|---|---|
| 01. | Information Officer (SPS-08) Age Limit: 30 years, Vacancies: 01 Quota: Merit Nature of Appointment: Regular Place of posting: NARC | i. Master degree in Journalism / Mass Communication / International Relations / English or equivalent qualification from HEC recognized university / institute with 03 years' experience in the relevant field. ii. Proficiency in computer use (MS Office / In-Page). iii. Strong Communications, presentation and interpersonal skills. |

- Age relaxation will be admissible as per PARC / Govt. rules.
- Those already in Govt. Services may apply Through Proper Channel.
- Interested candidates qualifying the above eligibility criteria may apply online on PARC website (www.parc.gov.pk) within fifteen (15) days from the date of advertisement. Application forms duly filled and signed by the applicants may also be sent to the following address.
- The Council reserves the right to increase or decrease number of posts and to postpone or stop the recruitment process at any stage.
- No TA / DA will be admissible for test / interview.

Director (Establishment),
PARC HQs, 20-Attaturk Avenue, G-5/1, Islamabad
PID(I) 4647/23 (Ph: 051-90762220)

KP completes uplift work on Chitral Economic Zone

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has achieved a milestone in the journey towards industrial development in province by completing development work on Chitral Economic Zone and the inauguration of the state-of-the-art Industrial Facilitation Office Building in it.

The zone was formally inaugurated by the the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Industries, Commerce, Technical Education and Affairs of the Newly Merged Districts, Dr. Aamer Abdullah at Gang Ghereth near Drosh in District Chitral on Thursday. Earlier, on arriving in the new industrial zone, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development and Management Company (KP-EZDMC) and senior management welcomed the Caretaker Minister.

On this occasion, the CEO gave an insightful briefing to the caretaker minister, outlining the comprehensive master plan of the Chitral EZ. The highlight of the ceremony included the unveiling of plaques commemorating the successful completion of the development works in the Chitral EZ and the inauguration of the Industrial Facilitation Office Building.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony, the Caretaker Minister said that the project will prove a game changer in the history economic development of Chitral. He added that after full operation of the zone the local skilled youth will have no need to go outside from their area in search of employment as the major potential source of this area is their skilled human resource.

Identifying industrialization as a key source of development, he stressed for further easing of the zones development and process and assured all possible support on behalf of the provincial government. He expressed the hope that the next government will also strive for the industrial facilitation in the province. The minister further said that the Chitral EZ is a major development for the improvement of specific industries of the area and vowed that due to its importance, its status will be converted to special economic zone.

On this occasion the minister also handed over allotment letters to various

investors who have received plots in zone for establishment of industries. He expressed his admiration for the hard work and dedication exhibited by the KP-EZDMC management and emphasized the importance of industrialization and assured full support from the provincial government to further facilitate the growth and success of economic zones in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

During his briefing the CEO KP-EZDMC said that the Chitral EZ is established on 40 acres has been developed during a span of two years. The completed infrastructure development works within the zone encompassed roads, drains, water supply, retaining walls, and the impressive office building. He said that keeping in view the overwhelming response and interest of potential investors an additional land of 1.72 acres of land has also been acquired.

Moreover, he said after full colonization the zone is expected to a substantial number of employment opportunities, making a significant contribution to the local economy. He said that the zone's rapid development aligns with the broader goals of fast-paced industrialization throughout the province. He said that due to its accessibility through the Lowari Tunnel, situated along an alternative route of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) the Chitral Economic Zone boasts high growth potential. This alternative route witnesses' massive inflow of tourists each year, making Chitral EZ strategically positioned for economic success.

The CEO KP-EZDMC is specifically designed to accommodate a variety of industries, making it an ideal destination for businesses looking to thrive in the region. Key sectors suitable for investment in the Chitral EZ include Marble industries, Industry for Embroidery & Knitting, Handicrafts Development, Readymade garments, Furniture, Food, Cold storages.

This diverse range of sectors not only align with the local resources and skills but also reflects the economic potential and opportunities for growth within Chitral EZ. The positive impact of the Chitral Economic Zone extends beyond its borders and will contribute in the economic development of adjoining districts such as Lower and Upper Dir.

JMC commits for nurturing cultural insight, journalistic excellence

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a captivating day-long seminar, the Department of Journalism & Mass Communication (JMC) at the University of Peshawar played host to the distinguished producer, researcher and cultural promoter Ariebe Azhar. Addressing a diverse audience of MPhil, PhD scholars, students, and media professionals, Azhar emphasized the paramount importance of preserving and formally archiving Pakistani culture.

Ariebe Azhar, serving as the keynote speaker, delved into the origin and significance of culture in society, highlighting its pivotal role in shaping our collective worldview. Renowned figures such as Prof Dr Faizullah Jan, Chairman of JMC, Dr Bakht Zaman, and Ali Imran Bangash also shared their insights on the occasion.

Adding a soulful touch to the event, Ariebe Azhar concluded with a mesmerizing performance of Sufi Kalam by Mian Muhammad Baksh and Khwaja Ghulam Farid, leaving the audience delighted.

It is worthy to mention here that the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Peshawar, following its legacy, organizes such orientation events for young journalists and media professionals to equip them with new trends in the society faced by working journalists in the field.

AG disposed off 15500 cases in last year

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advocate General (AG) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa office concluded as many as 15 thousand and 500 cases during last year, on Thursday. AG Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Amir Javed submitted annual performance report to provincial government. The disposed-off cases including civil, criminal and constitutional pleas, the performance report stated.

Advocate General Amir Javed said that the office was punctual as per Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Irshad Hussain for speedy disposal of cases before the courts. All Additional and Assistant Advocate Generals contest cases on behalf of the provincial government.

The last year performance is relatively better than previous while Peshawar High Court Principal bench stand ahead in disposal of cases, advocate general claimed. He added that the quick disposal is achieved due to commitment of law officers as well as will of the executive. Advocate General Office holding meetings on monthly basis for improvement of performance, Amir Javed said. The report also divided dispose cases on monthly basis for further insight into the performance.

Facilitation Desk setup

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Islamic Relief in collaboration with Habib Physiotherapy Complex and Habib Foundation Thursday established a Help Desk to facilitate transgender, women, children and persons with disabilities.

The Women and gender facilitation was established at District Social Welfare Office Jamrud with the joint efforts of the Islamic Relief in collaboration with Habib Physiotherapy Complex. Habib Foundation established a Help desk for persons with disabilities, women, children and transgender facilitation. It was inaugurated by Islamic Relief Regional Head Umer Farooq.

Speaking on this occasion, Dr Mahboob-ur-Rahman, Ibrar, Deputy Director, Miss Hina, Miss Huma, Nawaz Malik and Amjad were also present during the opening ceremony. The Help Desk would facilitate more than 10,000 people with different abilities including transgender, women and children.



PESHAWAR: KP Caretaker Chief Minister Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah witnessing signing of MoU between KP IT Board and Alkhidmat Foundation.

Election 2024 fever grips KP as advertisement business shines

PESHAWAR (APP): Election fever has gripped Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where political stalwarts started addressing public meetings to persuade voters while many have floated advertisements in newspapers for publicity. The print media including newspapers, journals and weekly magazines started receiving heavy advertising orders for election related publicity and earning maximum profits.

"Advertisements are effective tool to project party manifestos and election programs to attract electorates besides saving times," said Javed Nasim Khan, a candidate of NA-32 Peshawar. He said that social media were the cheapest way of publicity while urdu and English dailies also received heavy advertising orders.

Mahallah Jahangi, a hub of advertisement business attracted heavy advertising orders from election candidates from all districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The advertisers are seen busy till late night to fulfill candidates and their supporters demands. The politically fertile Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will witness a tight electoral battles among family members and relatives in different constituencies.

The close family relatives are running for national and provincial assembly seats in the province and accelerated public rallies and meetings. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf-Parliamentarians (PTI-P) Chairman Pervez Khattak and his sons were contesting from hometown Nowshera district. The former defence minister's children will face off against their uncle Liaquat Khattak on two

provincial assembly seats in Nowshera. Liaquat Khattak is a former provincial minister and younger brother of the PTI-P chief.

Pervez Khattak, who was elected as Member of National Assembly (MNA) on a Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) ticket in 2018 general election, has fielded his sons Ibrahim Khan and Ismail Khan for PK-85 and PK-86 Nowshera, respectively. The former KP chief minister himself is contesting for NA-33 and PK-88 and PK-87 on his newly founded party ticket. His son-in-law and former MNA Dr Imran Khattak will contest for NA-34 and PK-89 on February 8.

PTI-P chief's brother Liaquat Khattak will contest the polls on a Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) ticket from PK-87. He was elected as Member of Provincial Assembly (MPA) on a PTI ticket in 2018 general election. Similarly, Liaquat's son Ahad Khattak will go up against his uncle Pervez Khattak for PK-88.

The other strong candidates in the form of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) Ikhtiar Wali Khan, Awami National Party's (ANP) Jamshed Khan and PTI-backed Mian Mohammad Umar. In Swabi, former PTI MNA Usman Khan Tarakai will contest against his nephew Shahram Tarakai, son of PTI Senator Liaquat Khan Tarakai, for NA-20. Usman Tarakai was elected as MNA in 2013 and 2018 general elections.

PTI has also awarded a ticket to Shahram's younger brother Faisal Tarakai for one provincial assembly constituency in Swabi. However, rather than facing off people from within the family, his main rivals will

be the ANP and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). In Kohat, two brothers Amjad Afridi and Abbas Afridi are not directly contesting against each other as the latter is a candidate of PML-N for NA-35 and PK-91 while the former is running for PK-90 from where he was elected thrice as an independent. They are the sons of PPP Senator Shamim Afridi and close contest is expected.

Awami National Party (ANP) has given a ticket to former JUI-F MPA Zarin Gul Khan for PK-41 in Mansehra. On the other hand, Zarin's younger brother former PTI MPA Zar Gul Khan is vying for NA-15 on a PPP ticket. Zarin Khan has been part of the KP Assembly before but had left the ANP after developing differences with the leadership and joined the JUI-F. He was elected MPA in the 2013 general election.

His younger brother Zar Khan returned to the provincial assembly on a Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid ticket in the 2002 general election and was reelected as MPA on the PTI ticket in by-polls. In Chitral, two brothers Shehzada Iftikharuddin and Shehzada Pervez are contesting the upcoming polls from different political platforms with the former contesting on a PML-N ticket for NA-1 while the latter will compete for PK-2 on PTI-P's ticket.

Veteran politicians Ghulam Ahmed Bilour is contesting from NA 32 Peshawar where he is facing PTI backed candidate Asif Khan. The election campaign is heating ahead of the February 9 polls and candidates approaches large tribes to get maximum support ahead of the D Day.

Stakeholders commits to ensure elections on Feb 8

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A consultation was convened by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commission on the Status of Women with relevant government and civil society stakeholders to orient them on Commission's strategy with regard to safeguarding women's interests in general elections in the province and exploring areas of collaboration to work together for women inclusive elections on 8th February, 2024.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commission on the Status of Women will be setting up a monitoring cell for women-inclusive elections accessible through phone numbers 091-9216097, 091-9216107, and a WhatsApp 03169088829 to received reports and feedback from field related to issues faced by women voters and reports if any, of barring women from voting in any part of the Province.

The Commission Cell will be linked up with the Gender Desk and Control Room of Election Commission of Pakistan for quick redress. Speaking on the occasion, the Deputy Director Mr. Sohail Ahmad from ECP briefed the participants on measures it is ensuring to provide fair atmosphere women in the elections 2024. He also provided an orientation on the Code of Conduct for observers.

Ms. Saima Munir of Aurat Foundation delivered a technical session on different dimensions of monitoring of elections from gender lens particularly referring to allocation of 5% of general seats tickets to women party workers by their respective political parties to be eligible for election symbols as well as the mandatory minimum 10% voter's turnout as a requirement under the Election Act 2017.

The Chief Khatib

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mufti Tayyab Qureshi made a special appearance on this occasion and expressing his views on cultural practices of barring women from voting said there were clear Islamic injunctions for women rights in Islam and emphasized that no prohibition existed in Islam on their right to vote. The Secretary, KPSCW Ms. Robin Haider Bokhari said monitoring of women inclusive in election was core mandate of KPSCW.

Dr. Noreen Naseer Member KPSCW, said Commission relied on the support of Civil Society to promote women role in elections. The participants expressed commitment to work with KPSCW to promote the educational material and monitoring cell numbers within their networks on grassroots level in efforts to ensure women inclusive elections on 8 February 2024.



PESHAWAR: Adviser to KP CM on Housing Muhammad Ishfaq Khan visiting Jalozi Housing Scheme.

Power suspension notified

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) on Thursday notified that due to maintenance work power supply will remain suspended from Hattar grid station on 4th February from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Consequently, it said consumers of Hattar 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, Shadi, FDL, Mian Steel, Ali Steel, Al Hadeed, National Steel, Rehmat Steel, Capital Steel, Mujahid Steel, Noble, SAC, Mustihkam, HEC, Baffa, Nomi Steel, Hattar Steel, Centronics, Silver Laik, Fareed Steel, Adeel Steel, Gujar Steel, Sharif Steel, Neelum Paper, Cock Kola feeder will face inconvenience.

Likewise, it said that power supply will remain suspended from Siraj Baba grid station on 5th February from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. resultantly, consumers of Nusrat Abad, Godikhel, Takht Nusrati, Siraj Baba, Chokara feeders will face inconvenience. The power supply will also remain suspended from Besham Grid Station on 3rd and 5th February from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. resultantly, consumers of Besham 2 and 33 KV Pattan and Tehkal grid connected feeders will face inconvenience.

The power supply will remain suspended from Mingora Grid Station on 3rd and 5th February from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. resultantly, consumers of Malam Jaba, Express Saidu Hospital, Bandai, Mingora 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, Kabal, Nawa Kali, Saidu Sharif, Barikot 2, Odigram, Kabal 4, Matta 2, Fiza Ghat, Kabal 2, Gulda, Marghazar, Saidu Hospital, Kabal 3, Gogdara, Takhta Band, Qambar, Singer, MES, Haji Baba, Shin, Saidu Baba, Bara Bandai, Shah Dara, Hospital Express feeders will face inconvenience.

QWP leader rejects increase in PoL prices

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Commenting on the recent increase in the prices of the petroleum products, Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) Chairman Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao on Thursday said it would trigger a fresh wave of inflation and compound the problems of the common man.

Addressing a gathering in Kangara Union Council in Charsadda district, he said the prices of the petroleum products were already high and the fresh increase would create more problems for the have-nots. He said the people from the poor strata of the society were already faced with a host of problems, including skyrocketing inflation. Aftab Sherpao said the gov-

ernment had raised the tariff of natural gas several time in recent months. He said the government was again considering raising the electricity tariff, which would add insult to injury. The QWP leader said the purchasing power of the common people had also squeezed due to rising price-hike and the constant increase in the rates of the gas, electricity and POL would hit them badly. He said the prices of medicines were also raised by around 250 percent in recent months. "The people are unable to feed their children let alone sending them to schools," he said, adding that inflation had become unbearable for the people.

He also expressed concern over the poor law and order across the country,

saying the security situation was getting worse as the election day was drawing near. He demanded the government to take solid steps to beef up the security and provide protection to the election candidates. He feared that the violence could mar the electoral process and affect the voter turnout if security was not beefed up. Aftab Sherpao said the government must take steps so that the election candidates could run their campaign without any fear. He reiterated his resolve that if voted to power, the QWP would spare no effort to address the prevailing challenges and provide relief to people, who were bearing the brunt of the wrong decisions of the previous PTI government.



PESHAWAR: Adviser to KP CM Dr. Riaz Anwar addressing health performance review ceremony.

5819 police personnel to be deployed at polling stations

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: To ensure peaceful conduct of the general election in Peshawar, the Home Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and police have decided to deploy 5819 police personnel at polling stations on the election day.

According to the joint plan of KP Home Dept and police, in Peshawar a total of 1280 polling stations will be established, of which 577 have been declared very sensitive while 655 as sensitive and 48 as normal.

According to the Home Dept KP on Thursday, a police force consisting of

2885 personnel will be deployed at very sensitive polling stations while at sensitive polling stations, a force of 2620 personnel and at normal polling stations 144 police personnel will be deployed. Besides, 1170 lady police will also perform duty at the polling stations.

It said at a normal polling station, three police officials will perform duty while at the sensitive polling station, four police personnel and at every sensitive polling station, five policemen will perform duty. The Home Department said an increase in the number of police personnel at very sensitive and sensitive

polling stations was being mulled adding at the mentioned 100 hot spots police personnel with special secret cameras will be deployed to cope with any untoward situation.

The final inspection of arrangements for polling will be considered by the Election Commission and special teams will be formed for this purpose. At subdivision level a monitoring system and focal persons will also be deployed. The sensitive and very sensitive polling stations would be monitored through the CCTV cameras while some of the police personnel will have secret cameras on their uniform.



In brief

Bid to smuggle NCP car foiled

DERA GHAZI KHAN (INP): The police on Thursday foiled bid to smuggle non-custom paid vehicle and other items during separate actions at Ghazi Ghat check post of Dera Ghazi Khan. According to details, the D.G Khan Police following the directives of the District Police Officer (DPO) Ahmed Mohiuddin was ensuring tight checking at all entry and exit points of the city to prevent smuggling of non-custom paid vehicles and other material. The Ghazi Ghat police check post stopped a suspicious vehicle and checked documents. The police said that the vehicle was non-custom paid and was going to be delivered in the province. In another raid conducted by Ghazi Ghat police check post under the supervision of Incharge Check Post Rashid Hussain, the police foiled an attempt to smuggle non-custom paid items including tyres, soap, dry milk and china slat. The recovered material and vehicle were handed over to the custom department. Police said that the DPO Ahmed Mohiuddin has directed to ensure strict monitoring at all entry and exit points to prevent smuggling.

‘Gomal youth campaign’ begins

TANK: ‘Gomal Youth Campaign’ started in various localities of the district here on Thursday to attract attention of candidates for the solution of long lasting problems including health, education, roads, clean drinking water and employment. On the eve of general elections to be held on February 8, Gomal Youth Campaign campaign started by the youths led by Engineer Ghulam Muhammad Miani, Shaukat Bettani, Faizullah Gandapur, Shahid Shah Pir, Tariq Shah Garwaki and others, said that voters sell their precious votes at a cost of some money which drag the people of our three union councils including Gomal, Dabara and Sarangzuna towards backwardness. They said that health, education, water, roads and employment are their basic rights but they have been deprived from these basic rights in this era. They started door to door campaign in Kot Khaddak, Murtaza, Garwaki Machenkhel, Kot Nawaz and other areas that due to ignoring the attitude of the ex-parliamentarians when they were in power, they started the drive as if it was real time to reject them till fulfillment of their demands. They were using banners on vehicles that the youth community would select a candidate in the upcoming election, if they get a guarantee for the solution of their problems. They said that if found someone to sell vote would be dealt according to norms of the society and area.

Police kill dacoit in encounter

SHIKARPUR (PPI): Shikarpur police killed a dacoit during an encounter on Thursday. According to SSP Office Shikarpur, a police team on an information raided a Khanpur locality where dacoits were intending to commit the crime. Seeing the police, the dacoits opened fire on the police. The police also retaliated the fire in which a dacoit was killed while his two other accomplices escaped. The body was transported to Taluka Hospital Khanpur for medico legal formalities. The killed criminal was identified as Nawab Jatoti. On the directions of SSP Shikarpur, a police party has started search operation for the arrest of fleeing dacoits.

Various uplift projects in Kohat inaugurated

Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Interim Caretaker provincial minister for Finance, Revenue, Excise and Narcotics Control Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ahmad Rasool Bangash inaugurated various development projects under Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cities Improvement Program (KPCIP) in Kohat district.

A press release issued here on Thursday stated that the provincial caretaker minister Ahmad Rasool Bangash inaugurated sewerage treatment plant, water supply system and Milam Women Business Development Centre, which are being construct-

ed in KDA.

The minister paid a visit to sites of these mega development projects and examined ongoing development work. During the minister's visit, the Water and Sanitation Service Company Kohat (WSSCK) CEO Arif Rauf briefed comprehensively about the ongoing development projects. Arif Rauf on occasion raised the company's financial issues and said that tehsil municipal administration Kohat had not given salaries of two month of their staff to WSSCK, due which the institute and TMA is being faced with financial constraints.

While speaking on the occasion, the Minister

praised efforts of WSSCK in development of Kohat city and hoped the institute will continue to utilize all energies for the uplift of the city. On the occasion, the minister also planted a sampling in circuit house Kohat.

The WSSCK CEO Arif Rauf presented a crest as memento to the Minister Ahmad Rasool Bangash. On the occasion, Advisor Waqas Paracha, Director Technical Mian Shakeelur Rehman, Chief Engineer Mian Mohsin Gul, Deputy General Manager Afif, Director Gender Menhaz Iftikhar, Gender Coordinator Shela Gul, Resident Engineers Mian Yaqoob and Fasiullah.

Resident Inspectors to stop use of mobile in exam centers

F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: Speakers at a workshop have highlighted the role of resident inspectors in secondary and higher secondary school certificate examinations, saying that the principals and headmasters who are assigned duties as resident inspectors are responsible to stop candidates from taking mobile phones and cheating material inside examination centres. The workshop was arranged by board of intermediate and secondary education (BISE) Bannu at Government Shaheed Muhammad Ghasan Khan Centennial Model High School in Lakki Marwat City.

Speakers included controller of examination Dr Faiq Jan, assistant controller of examination Qasim Shah, deputy director IT Hakeem Khan Dawar, assistant director IT Rafiullah Khan and headmaster Abdul Qayyum Khan. ADEO Jamshed Khan, host school principal Sher Nawaz Khan, vice principal Khalilur Rehman and heads of schools were in attendance. Dr Faiq Jan shed

light on the role of resident inspectors in examinations, cluster-based examination centers, paper alternative to practical (PAP) and on-screen marking.

He asked the heads of schools to realize their heavy responsibilities and functions as resident inspectors and ensure provision of furniture, water, electricity and other facilities in the examination halls.

The resident inspectors keep the examination halls free from external interference and malpractices, besides they do not allow unauthorized persons to enter the school's premises during the examination", he maintained. He said that it was the prime responsibility of schools' bosses not to allow photocopier machines to be installed inside the schools.

Dr Faiq Jan and other speakers said that the establishment of cluster-based examination centers would help to reduce corroborative methods of cheating and provide a uniform environment of examination to students of both public and private sector institutions. "One of the

objectives of setting up these examination centres is to restrict the involvement of resident inspectors and teachers who create obstacles in the smooth conduct of examinations", they maintained.

The controller of examination said that the idea of mixed examination halls was beneficial to bring transparency and make the conduct of examinations more credible and free from biases. He also briefed the schools' heads about paper alternative to practical (PAP), on-screen marking and digitization of question papers.

He also sought their feedback on the SLO-based workshop the education board had arranged for the teachers of higher secondary and high schools in the district in December last year. The daylong workshop concluded with a question-answer session and a strong resolve from BISE officials and schools' bosses to launch concerted efforts to make examinations credible by eliminating the menace of cheating.



CHITRAL: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Industries, Commerce, Technical Education and Affairs of Newly Merged Districts, Dr. Aamer Abdullah inaugurating construction work on Chitral Ecomic Zone.

Civil society argues for empowerment of LG to ensure devolution of power

Anees Takar

MARDAN: Local government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) plays a crucial role in addressing the specific needs of communities, fostering development, and ensuring efficient service delivery. By decentralizing powers, local governments bring decision-making closer to the people, allowing for tailored solutions to local challenges. This results in improved infrastructure, better healthcare, and enhanced educational facilities, directly benefiting the public. Citizens appreciate the accessibility of local representatives who understand their concerns intimately.

The resident of Tariq Colony Mardan, Imtiaz Ahmad expressed support for local government and said that the Local Government (LG) has introduced a streamlined process of basic facilities like birth, Nikah, Divorce and death certificates by establishing these services in local council offices. This initiative marks a significant shift, eliminating the need for residents to travel to major cities or capital-based offices, thereby saving both time and resources, Imtiaz said.

Imtiaz said that the decentralized approach ensures swift approval of information, capitalizing on the intimate knowledge that local government representatives possess regarding the

people in their communities, their identification, and family lineage. This localized facilitation enhances efficiency and accessibility for residents in obtaining essential documents at their doorstep, said Imtiaz.

The provincial govt of Pakistan Tehreek Insaf (PTI) in KP introduced amendments to the Local Government Act in 2019. These changes paved the way for phased municipal elections across the province. The first phase took place on December 19, 2021, covering 17 districts, while the remaining 18 districts held elections on March 31, 2022. A total of 1,296 village councils, 550 neighborhood councils, and chairpersons and mayors for 24 tehsil councils and seven city tehsil councils were elected.

The 1st phase election was conducted on December 19, 2021 in 17 districts, where JUI-F won in 23 tehsils, with PTI securing 19 seats and nine independents also emerging victorious. In the 2nd phase of LGI in KP, the ruling party PTI secured 32 seats in tehsil councils. The Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) won 8 tehsil councils. Other parties and independents also secured seats, with the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) winning 5, Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) securing 3, and the Awami National Party (ANP), Quami Watan Party (QWP), and independents claiming 2 each. The

Pakistan People's Party (PPP), the Rah-e-Haq Party (RHP), and Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen (MWM) each won one seat.

In KP, over 25,000 elected local government representatives were set to receive more than Rs2.8 billion annually, encompassing salaries, travel expenses, and various allowances. The first proposed allocations include a monthly salary of Rs50,000 for Tehsil Chairmen and City Mayors, Rs30,000 for Village and Neighborhood Council Chairmen, and daily session allowances ranging from Rs500 to Rs1,000 for council members. Additionally, allowances for Entertainment and Travel Out-of-Tehsil are suggested.

Chairman Altaf disclosed that subsequent to initial promises, the monthly remuneration for Mayors was slashed to Rs. 40,000, while Chairmen received only Rs. 20,000. Expressing concern, he revealed that Neighborhood Chairmen had received remuneration for just one month in September 2022, leaving them financially strained. Some Chairmen are compelled by fiscal constraints and contemplate vacating rented premises. Despite staging a protest in Peshawar on December 19, 2023, demanding fund disbursement, they are yet to receive any allocations. Dr. Altaf lamented the insufficiency of funds, leading them to

explore alternative income sources like birth and death certificate registration fees which fall short of covering expenses, he acknowledged.

On June 3, 2022, further amendments were made to the Local Government Act, restricting the financial and administrative powers of elected representatives associated with opposition parties.

Local representatives express disappointment, citing a lack of funds for the fiscal year 2021-22. The Provincial Finance Commission had allocated Rs. 15 billion for local governments, but the funds were not released until the end of the financial year on June 30, 2021. For the ongoing fiscal year (2022-23), Rs. 41 billion has been allocated, but the provincial government has yet to release the funds, leaving local governments financially constrained.

Yousaf Khan, a prominent local leader, emphasized the importance of an effective local governance system. He explained that local representatives understand the ground-level issues and can address them promptly. However, political interventions hinder the smooth transfer of powers to the local government, leading to incomplete and ineffective solutions.

Critics argue that the previous provincial government in KP, facing defeat in the local elec-

tions, introduced amendments that weakened the local governance system. Yousaf Khan, who held various positions in local governance, stated that the amendments were designed to limit the powers of elected representatives and undermine their effectiveness.

Mayor Mardan Himayatullah Mayar expressed concerns about the amendments, stating that the provincial government had centralized authority, stripping local governments of their decision-making autonomy. He criticized the move, highlighting that grants from the provincial government would no longer go directly to local governments, negatively impacting their ability to address community issues.

Mayar said that the struggle for power between provincial and local governments continues to impact the efficiency of the local governance system. He said that local representatives face challenges in accessing essential funds and making timely decisions to address the needs of their communities. "The ongoing tug-of-war threatens the effectiveness of the local governance model, leaving citizens waiting for solutions to their everyday problems" said Mayar.

Engineer Adil Nawaz, Secretary Information PTI Peshawar Region, stated that in the history of Pakistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Imran Khan is the only leader who

aspired to decentralize powers to the grassroots level for the ease of the public. He credited Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) for conducting local government elections twice during their tenure, receiving global acclaim. Previously, district and tehsil councils were selected through indirect elections, leading to corruption. Imran Khan's governance ended this practice to discourage the horse trading culture, allowing direct elections of representatives at the tehsil and district levels. Adil Nawaz highlighted that while other democratic governments avoided decentralizing powers, PTI's commitment to local government reforms in KP strengthened the democratic system, fostering public trust and participation.

Imtiaz expressed frustration, stating that when approaching local representatives to address the pressing issue of improving the street and drainage system in their locality, they were repeatedly informed about the unavailability of funds. Despite making three visits to the local council regarding this matter, Imtiaz recounted receiving the same response on every occasion. He urged higher authorities to allocate necessary funds to local representatives, emphasizing the critical need for these resources to enhance the well-being of their community.



KOHAT: Interim Caretaker provincial minister for Finance, Revenue, Excise and Narcotics Control Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ahmad Rasool Bangash inaugurated Mallam Women Business Centre.

Police arrests 12040 alleged culprits: DPO

F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: District Police Officer (DPO) Toba Tek Singh said that police registered 11 thousand and 118 cases throughout the district during 2023, on Thursday.

This he claimed while talking to The Frontier Post and added that 12040 accused were arrested and 27 crore 50 lakh 19 thousand 491 rupees were recovered. He added that 2218 criminals were arrested across the district, thus 901 court fugitives were arrested, illegal weapons 520 cases were registered and the same number of accused were arrested, and recovered 69 guns, 408 pistols, 42 rifle, two Kalashnikovs from the culprits.

The District Police Officer (DPO) further said that 718 cases of narcotics were registered, from the possession of the accused (312.99 kg of hashish), (32,505 kg of heroin), (16936 liters of alcohol), (26 Chalo Bhatti) (4825 liters of alcohol), (2,661 kg of opium) (527 kg of ice) exported. Apart from this, 108 accused were arrested in 23 cases of gambling, from whose possession 2,61,290 rupees were recovered.

Last year, the district police arrested 99 members of 30 gangs involved in 265 cases, from whose possession (6 cows, 1 buffalo, 2 calves, 4 goats, 52 motorcycles, 40 pistols, 2 guns, 03 rifles, 113 bullets, solar plates + inverter, Toka machine, TR (Garder, cash and household goods etc. exports.

The DPO said that 958 cases were registered under the National Action Plan across the district. He said that our mission is against the criminal people and this mission will continue, inshallah, our effort is to eliminate crime forever. In the end, he said that the doors of my office are always open for justice to the people.

Gohar says committed to ensure security for polls

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Caretaker Interior Minister Dr. Gohar Ejaz says the government is committed to ensure that the elections are held freely, fairly, and peacefully. He was chairing a review meeting here Thursday to assess the overall security situation ahead of the upcoming elections.

During the meeting, the administration provided a detailed briefing on the security situation. Speaking on the occasion, the Interior Minister said that close collaboration with all stakeholders is being undertaken to ensure that

the security environment is conducive for a smooth electoral process.

It is pertinent to mention here that at least six people were killed and 13 others sustained injuries in three violent incidents in Balochistan's Sibi, Quetta and Chaman and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Bajaur district within span of a day. The wave of violence began in Sibi when four people were killed and five others sustained injuries in a blast that occurred at Jinnah Road Sibi near political party's rally on Tuesday. The police said that the explosive material was installed in a motorcycle that led to explosion.

The law enforcers have cordoned off the area and called bomb disposal squad.

Separately, scores of armed attacks in Chaman, Quetta and other areas in Balochistan left a political activist dead and four others injured on Wednesday. Unidentified assailants opened fire at the Awami National Party (ANP) office in Chaman leaving a party activist Zahoor Ahmed dead, while another worker was injured. In another incident unknown persons hurled hand grenade at People's Party's election office at Saryab Road in Quetta leaving three persons injured.

PTI activist withdraws in favour of party nominee

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Pakistan Tehreek Insaf disgruntled activist and independent candidate for NA 6 Ali Shah Mishwani on Thursday announced to withdraw his nomination in favour of the PTI nominee Muhammad Bashir Khan. He made the announcement during a grand jirga of party leaders held at a private wedding hall in Timergara.

The PTI nominee for NA 6 Muhammad Bashir Khan, NA 7 candidate Syed Mahboob Shah and dozens of other party activists were also in attendance. Speaking on the occasion, Ali Shah said that he had

submitted his nomination papers after due consultation with party workers and supporters. He said that keeping the crucial moments for the party and its founder Imran Khan he decided to withdraw in favour of the party ticket holder. He said that he was a real tiger of Imran Khan but was badly ignored to be awarded ticket in 2013, 2018 and 2024 general elections, and 2015 and 2021 local government polls. He said the PTI local leaders and workers convinced him to give sacrifice for the sake of Imran Khan.

The Jamaat-i-Islami chief Sirajul Haq is also contesting elections for NA 6 Lower Dir-I. The PTI

Muhammad Bashir Khan with 63071 votes had won the seat in 2018 while defeating the JI chief Sirajul Haq who had got 46927 votes. The ANP candidate Nazir Khan had bagged 19743 votes and the PPP's Syed Shahid Jan had obtained 10074 votes in 2018 general elections. Now the ANP has fielded its district president and former MPA Haji Bahadar Khan to compete with the PTI's Muhammad Bashir Khan and the JI's Sirajul Haq. The withdrawal of Ali Shah Mishwani, according to political analysts, would benefit the PTI candidate Muhammad Bashir Khan against the JI chief Sirajul Haq.

PTI president urged activists to support party backed candidates

F.P. Report

SUJAWAL: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) district president Syed Imran Ali Shah Advocate has urged office bearers as well as general public to avoid independent candidates projecting themselves as PTI candidates.

He said while talking to The Frontier Post's corre-

spondent on Thursday morning that few independent candidates including a current office bearer of PTI Sujawal have been posing themselves as the candidate of Pakistan Tehreek-E-Insaf during their election campaigns. He reiterated that party has awarded tickets to Advocate Syed Mumtaz Ali Shah for NA-224 having electoral symbol of "Clock" while Danish

Deedar Ali possesses the ticket for PS: 73 with electoral symbol of "dice".

Without disclosing the name of office bearer who is in violation of the party's code of conduct he said that; He had informed the provincial leadership of the party regarding the transgression and the ongoing state of affairs in the district.



\$12.5 billion fraud that has shocked Vietnam

HANOI (AFP): Retired nurse Nga put her life savings into a bond at Vietnam's SCB bank, but now cannot access her money after being caught up with tens of thousands in a multibillion-dollar scam that has shocked the nation.

Now, property tycoon Truong My Lan is facing a trial in the country's biggest ever fraud case, accused of embezzling \$12.5 billion by investigators after being arrested in a national corruption crackdown analysts say has hit the economy and unsettled foreign investors. Lan, chair of major developer Van Thinh Phat, is said to have swindled the cash from Saigon Commercial Bank (SCB) for years, leaving unsuspecting investors out of pocket and leading hundreds to stage rare protests in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.

Nga -- a pseudonym to protect her identity -- is among the 42,000 victims of the Van Thinh Phat scandal identified by police. "My children urged me to spend the money, to travel, but I did not. I put my whole life savings there," said the 67-year-old Hanoi resident, showing AFP the bond certificates worth around \$120,000 issued by SCB.

"I planned to use the money to maintain our house... to help my kids," Police say those caught up in the scam are all SCB bondholders who cannot withdraw their money and have not received interest or principal payments since Lan's arrest in October 2022.

Lan, who is married to a wealthy Hong Kong businessman, is accused of setting up fake loan applications to withdraw money from SCB, of which she owned a 90 percent stake. Between February 2019

and September 2022, her driver transported the equivalent of more than \$4.4 billion in cash from SCB's headquarters in Ho Chi Minh City to her nearby home and Van Thinh Phat's head office. Her alleged asset appropriation is equivalent to around three percent of Vietnam's 2022 GDP.

Despite a wave of high-profile arrests under the anti-corruption drive, the size of the scandal has shocked the country, said Linh Nguyen, lead analyst for consultancy Vietnam at Control Risks. "Now it's raised the question: are there any other cases of a similar scale out there?" she told AFP.

"If one businesswoman with one company and one bank could leverage such huge capital from the economy, then how about in other banks and in other companies?" Banking expert Bui Kien Thanh also warned the scandal may be "just the tip of the iceberg". "In my view... many, many other banks are doing the same thing, although maybe to a lesser extent," he said.

Eighty-five others will face trial alongside Lan, including former central bankers, ex-SCB executives and former government officials. Among them is one former employee at the State Bank of Vietnam -- the central bank -- who is accused of accepting \$5.2 million in bribes to conceal SCB's violations and poor financial situation. Other top business leaders targeted in the anti-corruption drive -- and accused of massive fraud -- include Truong Quy Thanh, the head of soft drink giant Tan Hiep Phat Group.

He is to be prosecuted along with his two daughters for allegedly appropri-

ating \$31.5 million. Do Anh Dung, chairman of developer Tan Hoang Minh Group, will also face trial for illegally acquiring \$355 million in a bond sale to more than 6,500 investors. The anti-graft drive has even dealt a blow to Vietnam's economy, Luc Can, chief economist at state-owned bank BIDV, said during a recent panel discussion.

Last year the government disbursed just 65 percent of its annual target for public investment capital, he said. With many fearful of being caught up in the crackdown, everyday transactions within business and the state apparatus have slowed. The economy grew just over five percent in 2023, missing the government's 6.5 percent target.

Meanwhile, the price of gold -- a safe haven in times of turmoil and uncertainty -- hit a record high in the country last month, surpassing global rates by a third. Linh, of Control Risks, said the trend showed ordinary Vietnamese feel it is "safer to keep money under your pillow or in gold bars in your safe box at home". She added that some foreign investors had also been spooked, even as they have broadly praised what they see as the campaign's aim to improve rule of law.

"It doesn't mean that (foreign investors are) going to run away or shift their interests into other countries," Linh said. "It might just be they're delaying... until everything settles down." For Nga, who has logged her case with police, justice cannot come soon enough. "Those that committed these crimes must be duly punished," she said. "I trust and I hope that I can get back my money as I did nothing bad to anyone."

US F-16 crashes in South Korea

SEOUL (Reuters): A US F-16 fighter jet crashed into the sea off South Korea's west coast and the pilot was rescued safely, a US Air Force unit stationed in the country said, the second crash of an F-16 in just over a month in the country.

The F-16 Fighting Falcon assigned to the 8th Fighter Wing experienced "an in-flight emergency" over the sea and crashed, the unit said in a statement. The pilot, who ejected safely and was rescued about an hour later, is conscious and was transported to a medical facility for assessment. The commander of the 8th Fighter Wing, Colonel Matthew Gaetke, thanked the South Korean rescuers who worked with the US military on the recovery of the pilot and said the focus was now to find and recover the aircraft, it said.

The west coast city of Gunsan is home to one of the two main air bases used by the US military in South Korea. In December, another F-16 jet crashed while on a routine training flight and the pilot was rescued.

Kyiv has a lot of problems: Kremlin

MOSCOW (Reuters): The Kremlin said that it was monitoring the situation around Valery Zaluzhny, Ukraine's top military commander, after Western and Ukrainian media outlets said President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was trying to oust Zaluzhny.

The media reports, attributed to unnamed sources with knowledge of the matter, said that Zelenskyy in a meeting had offered Zaluzhny, the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, a new role but that the general had refused. Commenting on the situation around Zaluzhny, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said:

"Of course we are following this. There are still a lot of questions. (But) one thing remains obvious - the Kyiv regime has a lot of problems, things are not going well there," said Peskov. "It is obvious that the failed (summer) counter-offensive and the problems on the front are leading to growing contradictions among the representatives of this Kyiv regime. These contradictions will grow as the special military operation (by Russia) continues to be successful."

‘China has indisputable sovereignty’

BEIJING (Reuters): China has indisputable sovereignty over the Scarborough Shoal and its adjacent waters, and has always resolutely countered infringements by the Philippines, a spokesperson for China Coast Guard said in a statement released.

The spokesperson said four Philippine personnel illegally intruded in certain areas on Jan. 28, and the Coast Guard warned them to leave in accordance with the law. The interaction was "professional and standardised", according to the statement.

Accusations and runs-in have occurred frequently between the two countries over the past year over disputed territorial areas of the South China Sea. China claims sovereignty over almost the entire South China Sea, which has angered neighbouring countries that dispute some boundaries they say cut into their exclusive economic zones. "China's Coast Guard will, as always, defend and enforce" the law in waters under the country's jurisdiction, the statement said, citing the spokesperson.

China routinely conducts patrols of the South China Sea even as tensions simmer between it and the Philippines, which recently had its own joint military patrol in the region with its ally - the United States - drawing the ire of China. The spokesperson said the Coast Guard will firmly safeguard national sovereignty and maritime rights and interests.



PARIS: Protesters block the A35 highway with tractors near Strasbourg in eastern France.

SK opposition leader accuses president of divisive politics

SEOUL (AP): A South Korean opposition leader who was stabbed in an attack and underwent surgery earlier this month accused the country's conservative president of promoting divisive politics and worsening an already toxic discourse in the nation.

Lee Jae-myung also urged voters to support his liberal Democratic Party in the April parliamentary elections in order to keep what he described as President Yoon Suk Yeol's "prosecutorial dictatorship" in check. With Yoon, "our society has become even more extremely polarized," said Lee, speaking at his first news conference since the Jan. 2 attack. Instead of "leading the way in promoting national unity," Yoon is "obsessed with choosing sides and waging an outdated ideological war."

Lee was attacked during an event in the southeastern city of Busan. The attacker, a man police say they believe acted alone, approached him allegedly for an autograph and stabbed him in the neck, then left him bleeding and slumped on the floor. Lee underwent surgery and spent eight days in hospital before his release. The suspect, who was arrested, later told investigators that he wanted to kill Lee to prevent him from becoming president.

At the news conference, Lee, who narrowly lost to Yoon in the 2022 presidential race, also claimed that his rival's allegedly reckless policies were letting a decaying job market and tensions with nuclear-armed North Korea get out of hand. Lee is

seen as one of the early favorites for the 2027 presidential election but has struggled with a prolonged prosecutorial investigation over corruption allegations stemming from his days as mayor of the city of Seongnam, a job he held for a decade until 2018. He has denied legal wrongdoing and accused Yoon, a prosecutor-turned-president, of pursuing a political vendetta.

Lee in his remarks described the attack against him as "an assassination attempt" in broad daylight, and an event previously "unthinkable in South Korea, reputed as the safest country in the world." In another attack last week, Bae Hyunjin, a lawmaker from Yoon's People Power Party, was treated for lacerations after being repeatedly struck in the head by a rock-wielding 14-year-old boy.

South Korean politics are deeply divided along ideological and generational lines, as well as regional loyalties, with political bickering intensifying ahead of the April vote. The elections are widely seen as a referendum on Yoon, who has already been struggling with low approval ratings and an opposition-controlled National Assembly that has limited the implementation of his agenda. Since taking office, Yoon has turned from the dovish approach of his liberal predecessor, Moon Jae-in, who had pursued inter-Korean rapprochement, and instead moved to expand the South's combined military exercises with the United States and Japan to cope with the North's evolving threats.

Yoon has also sought stronger assurances from Washington that the US would act swiftly and decisively to protect its ally in the event of a North Korean nuclear attack. Also, Lee reiterated his standing criticism of Yoon's hardened approach, saying it is contributing to the heightened North-South tensions. He called for renewed South Korean efforts to resume communication with the North -- most urgently the revival of a disconnected military hotline between the two to prevent accidental cross-border clashes.

Lee also berated North Korean leader Kim Jong Un for his recent declaration of abandoning the North's longstanding objective of reconciliation with South Korea and defining the South constitutionally as the North's most hostile foreign enemy. Kim's threats are pushing the Koreans dangerously close to a possible military clash, Lee said adding that preventing an escalation was now the priority.

During a government meeting, Yoon warned of the possibility that North Korea could conduct various provocations ahead of the April elections in attempting to influence the outcome. Experts say North Korea likely prefers that the opposition to maintain majority in the National Assembly in the South, thereby improving the opposition's prospects for the presidential election. The North's reasoning, they say, is that a liberal government in Seoul would be more willing to make concessions to Pyongyang.

Rwanda deportations could be low if other deals done: James Cleverly

LONDON (BBC): The home secretary has said deportations under the UK's agreement with Rwanda could be "quite low", depending on other factors. James Cleverly told MPs the agreement with the east African nation was "only one part" of the government's response to illegal migration. Returns deals with other countries could also have a "very significant impact" on the number sent, he added. However, he refused to predict how many deportations would take place.

He added that the agreement with Rwanda was uncapped - and an exact number was "entirely contingent on a whole set of other work". Questions over the cost of the scheme have grown louder after it emerged last month the UK has paid £240m to Rwanda so far, despite legal wrangles meaning no one has yet been sent there. Under the five-year plan, the UK would send an unspecified number of asylum seekers to Rwanda - where they can apply to become a refugee there, or seek asylum in another "safe third country".

Legislation to revive the scheme after it was ruled unlawful by the Supreme Court was passed by MPs earlier this month, but is expected to run into considerable opposition in the House of Lords. Despite the opposition to the plan, ministers are aiming to get the first flights off by the spring and hope it will then deter people from crossing the Channel in small boats. At a session of the Home Affairs Committee, a top Home Office official said 33,085 asylum seekers had entered the system since new legal obligations to remove illegal arrivals, subject to certain conditions, came into force last July.

Asked how many of these could be sent to Rwanda, Mr Cleverly told the MPs the number of people sent could be "nearly at" that figure, but it was "entirely contingent" on the circumstances. It was "entirely feasible a significant number within that

cohort will be returned to their country of origin," he argued, whilst deals with other countries could also "have a very significant impact". "It may well be if we're successful with returns agreements, if circumstances in other countries change, it may well be that the figure could be quite low," he added.

Under repeated questioning, he refused to put a figure on the number of deportations required to create a deterrent effect - but conceded they would need to "visibly send a signal" to potential migrants. Home Office officials have declined to sign off the scheme as value for money, arguing the extent to which it will deter migrants is impossible to calculate until flights to Rwanda actually begin. Ministers say once up and running, the scheme will save taxpayers money by reducing the amount the government spends on housing migrants in UK hotels, currently £8m a day.

However, the department has struggled to

return large numbers of the small boat migrants coming to the UK in recent years. Last month it emerged that only 1,040 small boat arrivals who weren't foreign convicted criminals have been returned to their country, or another country, in the last three years. Of these, only 408 were not nationals of Albania, with which the government struck a co-operation deal to speed up returns in late 2022.

As an EU member, the UK could return hundreds of migrants a year under the so-called Dublin regulations - but the EU has refused to replicate this as part of a new agreement. Labour has described the Rwanda policy as a "gimmick" and vowed to scrap it if it wins power at the general election later this year. It also says it would negotiate a new deal with the EU to return migrants there. The party has suggested that in exchange it may be willing to accept a quota of migrants in the UK, but has not specified what this would be.

It showed tattooed skin and said that, checked against DNA and identity records Russian authorities hold of Ukrainian prisoners of war, the investigation proved that those killed were Ukrainian soldiers. Russia said on Friday it had recovered Ukrainian identity documents and tattooed body parts from the crash site near the Ukrainian border. Ukraine did not immediately comment on the statement by the investigative committee.

Russia says it has evidence US Patriot missiles downed its military transport plane

MOSCOW (Reuters): Russian investigators said on Thursday they had evidence showing that Ukraine's military shot down a Russian Il-76 military transport plane last week with US-made Patriot surface-to-air missiles.

The Russian Air Force Il-76 fell from the skies on Jan. 24. Russia said all 74 people on board, including 65 captured Ukrainian soldiers en route to be swapped for Russian prisoners of war, were killed, and blamed Kyiv for downing the plane. The investigators released footage of body parts which they said proved those aboard were Ukrainian military personnel.

Kyiv, which is fighting

Russian forces in Ukraine, has neither confirmed nor denied that it downed the plane, but has challenged details of Moscow's account and called for an international investigation. Russia's State

Investigative Committee said in a statement that Ukrainian soldiers in the area of Lyptsi in the Kharkiv region had fired two missiles at the plane.

Among the fragments were serial numbers with English acronyms, including "CONFIDENTIAL" classified by PATRIOT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION GUIDE DATED: 9/22/83 ADDENDUM DATED 11/28/83 8/8/84 C O N T R A C T NO/DAAH01-86C-A018,"

the committee said in a statement. "The fragments seized from the scene, according to their design features, geometric characteristics and available markings, are structural elements of the MIM-104A anti-aircraft guided missile of the Patriot complex of the United States, developed by Raytheon and Hughes corporations and manufactured by Raytheon," the committee said.

It published a short video showing investigators inspecting some of the 116 missile fragments on the ground in an unspecified location. One of the fragments included the what appears to be "ATRIOT" in English. A separate video

from the Investigations Committee, which appeared to be taken at the crash site, showed officials putting what they said were body fragments into bags for evidence.

It showed tattooed skin and said that, checked against DNA and identity records Russian authorities hold of Ukrainian prisoners of war, the investigation proved that those killed were Ukrainian soldiers. Russia said on Friday it had recovered Ukrainian identity documents and tattooed body parts from the crash site near the Ukrainian border. Ukraine did not immediately comment on the statement by the investigative committee.

‘Drop territorial claim if you want a peace treaty’

MOSCOW (Reuters): Senior Russian security official Dmitry Medvedev told Japan it would have to drop territorial claims to a group of Pacific islands if it wanted to conclude a peace treaty with Russia formally ending World War Two.

The blunt remarks by Medvedev, a former president who is deputy chairman of Russia's Security Council, over what Moscow calls the Kuril islands are likely to anger Japan which lays claim to four of the southernmost islands, which it calls the Northern Territories. Russia, the main successor state to the Soviet Union, and Japan have never signed a peace treaty formally ending their hostilities during World War Two, with the islands remaining the primary stumbling block.

The islands are located off Hokkaido, Japan's northernmost main island, and were seized by the Soviet Union at the end of World War Two. Diplomats on both sides once spoke of the possibility of reviving a Soviet-era draft agreement

that envisaged returning two of the four islands to Japan as part of a peace deal.

But Russia withdrew from peace treaty talks with Japan and froze joint economic projects related to the islands in 2022 because of Japanese sanctions over Russia's war in Ukraine and relations have soured further since. Medvedev said he was responding to comments by Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida who he said had spoken in favour of a peace treaty with Russia.

"Nobody's against the peace treaty on the understanding that ... the 'territorial question' is closed once and for all in accordance with the constitution of Russia," Medvedev said on his official X account. In 2020, Russia's constitution was amended to bar handing over territory to a foreign power. Medvedev, who styles himself as one of the Kremlin's most hardline anti-Western hawks, said Japan would also have to accept that Russia would develop the Kuril islands and station new weapons

there.

"We don't give a damn about the 'feelings of the Japanese' concerning the so-called 'Northern Territories'. These are not disputed territories but Russia," said Medvedev. "And those samurai who feel especially sad can end their life in a traditional Japanese way, by committing seppuku (Japanese ritualistic suicide by disembowelment). If they dare, of course." Medvedev accused Japan of cosying up to the United States despite the fact that the US military had dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

Russia said in December it regarded joint military exercises by Japan, the United States and Australia near Hokkaido to be a "potential security threat". It has complained about Japan - with US help - expanding its military infrastructure and increasing arms purchases. Japan has periodically expressed unease about Russia beefing up its military infrastructure on the disputed island chain.

372 deaths due to hunger in six months: Ethiopia

ADDIS ABABA (Reuters): At least 372 people have died in two northern Ethiopian regions from drought-induced hunger in the last six months, a senior government official said, adding to the regions' challenges arising from conflict.

Endale Haile, head of the Ethiopian Institution of the Ombudsman, which receives complaints from the public against government departments, said its investigations found that 351 people had died in the Tigray region, while another 21 had died in neighbouring Amhara. Endale said the findings were from a 10-day assessment in the two regions, and it was possible there were more deaths.

"If we expand our sample the death figure may increase. But our main purpose is for the govern-

ment to give the issue attention and inform them how the issue is getting serious. So that they will take actions," he told Reuters. Legesse Tulu, government spokesperson, Mengasha Fentaw, spokesperson of Amhara region and Redaei Halefom, spokesperson of Tigray, did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the deaths.

Ethiopia's food crisis has deepened in recent years as a result of war in the Tigray region and the Horn of Africa's worst drought in decades, with the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) saying just over 20 million people are in need of assistance. Thereafter, on and off fighting in Amhara, which has also experienced prolonged drought, between Amhara state forces and local militia-

men became Ethiopia's biggest security crisis since the end of a two-year civil war in Tigray in 2022.

In late December, Getachew Reda, the president of Tigray region's interim administration, said 91% of the region's population was at risk of starvation and death and the situation was beyond the administration's capacity to handle. At the time, government spokesperson Legesse rejected the report saying it lacked factual correctness.

Last May, the WFP suspended food aid to Tigray following reports of widespread theft of donations. It then suspended aid to all of Ethiopia in June, following the same action from the United States. WFP resumed limited distribution in August, while the US resumed in December.

The Frontier Post

Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

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

Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001

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

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

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

Flourishing terrorism and need of hour

THE 262nd Corps Commanders Conference (CCC) of the Pakistan Army was recently held at the General Headquarters (GHQ) Rawalpindi. The topmost forum of the Pakistan Army took a holistic overview of the gambit of the issues that offer multiple challenges to the Country's Defense, Security, and law enforcement Apparatuses amid nationwide general elections, evolving regional geopolitical dynamics, domestic and transnational terrorism and recent exchange of fire at Pak-Iran border. According to the official press release of the ISPR, the forum paid rich tribute to the supreme sacrifices of Shuhadas including officers and men of the Armed Forces, Law Enforcement Agencies, and the citizens who have laid their lives to ensure peace and stability in the country. The forum expressed resolve that terrorists, their facilitators, and abettors, working on the behest of hostile forces to destabilize Pakistan, will be dealt with the full might of the state. The Army Chief General Asim Munir declared that Pakistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity are sacrosanct and inviolable. Pakistan believes in peaceful co-existence with all states, however, there would never be any compromise over the country's sovereignty, national honour, and aspirations of Pakistani people.

The Corps Commanders Conference and the statement of the Army Chief come at a crucial period when Pakistan is fully braced up for the General Election 2024 and significant security challenges lie ahead. Pakistan faces a continued risk of cross-border terrorism from its joint border with Afghanistan, where the hordes of terrorists often target Pakistani border posts, and illegally cross the border to trade terrorism inside Pakistan. Similar situations exist on the Pak-Iran border, wherein, Baloch insurgents and the Iranian separatist group frequently illegally cross the border to perpetrate terrorism in Pakistan and Iran. The recent incursion of Iranian security forces into Pakistani territory and Pakistan's military surgical strikes against Pakistani-proscribed terrorist groups in Iran is a real challenge that can ignite a full-fledged war between the two neighbours at any time in the future.

The menace of terrorism persistently stems out in Pakistan border regions, particularly in newly merged districts of Erstwhile FATA and some parts of Balochistan. The law and order situation appears to be much more delicate as the election campaign is in full swing and the grand contest for general elections drawing down next week. There has been a significant upsurge in terrorism in certain areas where terrorist outfits targeting Pakistan military installations and LEA personnel daily while attacks on political rallies and election candidates were also reported in KP and Balochistan. The Election Commission has requested the Army's assistance from the government for the security of electoral staff and polling stations which is of utmost importance for smooth, secure, and credible elections in the country. Meanwhile, the security of election rallies, contesting candidates, and political leaders throughout this period is also crucial as any unfortunate incident could derail this month-long political exercise and push the country into fresh haphazard anarchy.

The election season is a one-time opportunity for anti-state elements to exploit the situation against the state but the menace of terrorism has been brandishing hindered in our nation since early 2003. Pakistani LEAs, our young officers, soldiers, and common citizens offered unimaginable sacrifices during the war against terrorism but, this monster flourishes with the same vigour and embattle with the state institutions so far. Although the Counter Terrorism campaign is very important however ignoring preach of radical thoughts and rising extremism are the elements that provide a breeding ground for terrorism. The government and Pakistan Army must review their Counter Terrorism strategy, remove its flaws, and also focus on eliminating those terror-birth places that produce terrorists alongside launching an effective nationwide anti-terrorism crusade to defeat this menace once and for all. Meanwhile, an anti-terror consortium consisting of Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan is a must to permanently stall the terrorism issue, otherwise, this menace could not be dealt with by any of the three nations through uncoordinated domestic efforts effectively.

Hanoi-Manila security partnership

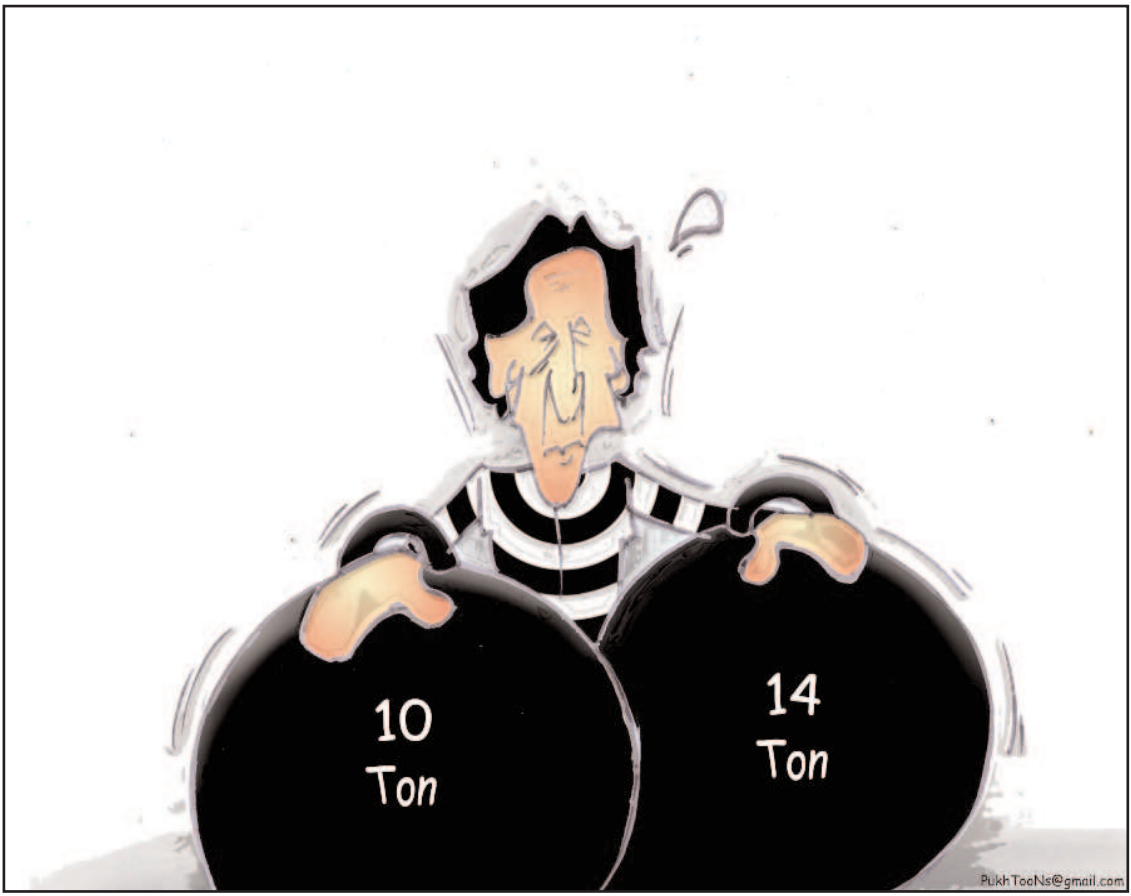
VIETNAM and the Philippines have agreed to cooperate on maritime security in the South China Sea, whose majority part is contested by Beijing and the world is well aware of the global tussle currently underway in that region. The historic security accord was signed by the two neighbours during the recent visit of Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to Hanoi, which paved the way for joint patrol, teamwork, and collective incident management in the disputed waters.

The South China Sea is at the centre of territorial tussles between the People's Republic of China, and multiple neighbouring states including Taiwan, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Cambodia, Brunei, and others. China claims almost the entire sea as its sovereign territory, while the Philippines, Vietnam, and other Southeast Asian nations claim various islands, islets, reefs, and shoals around their coasts. An estimated \$5 trillion in international trade passes through those waters each year.

In the modern era, the South China Sea and adjoining territorial waters are the most dangerous and highly contested region in the world. Tension remained high during the past several months, as multiple border clashes and bullying incidents occurred wherein, the Philippines Navy was harassed by the Chinese Coast Guards. The Philippines Navy avoided a direct clash with its powerful neighbour until it achieved credible security guarantees from its Western allies and forged trustable partnerships with its neighbourhood. The prudent Ferdinand conceived the idea of allying with anti-China nations before challenging the resolute enemy. Henceforth, the Philippines and Vietnam have combined their potential and read to thwart any ill-motivated move by the Chinese Navy in the coming months and afterwards. Presently, the involvement of Western powers and a string of global partnerships and alliances has transformed regional hostility into a potential global nuclear flash point. Pre-clash activities, such as fleet marches of aircraft carriers and fly-pasts of fighter jets often conducted by the opposing powers to show off their military might, lathel arsenals, and war preparedness. The West smartly uses its cards and gradually squeezes space for its Staunch adversary. A brawl is in the making, however, leaders' legacy and future events would affect time, nature, and the intensity of the collision.

Important Notice

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



US should rethink its Middle East strategy

Osama Al-Sharif

SUNDAY'S lethal drone attack on US forces stationed at a military post in northeastern Jordan was the most severe challenge to America's military presence in the region since Oct. 7, when Hamas attacked southern Israel. US forces in Syria and Iraq have been targeted at least 150 times since then by pro-Iranian militias based in Iraq. But three US soldiers were killed in the Jordan attack and as many as 30 injured.

The drone is believed to have been launched from Iraq. The so-called Islamic Resistance in Iraq, an umbrella of several Shiite groups attached to the Popular Mobilization Units, claimed responsibility. The target location is believed to be a vital center of military communications and surveillance that covers Syria, Iraq and Jordan. Pro-Iranian groups have said their post-Oct. 7 operations are in response to Israel's war on Gaza. The same groups claim they have attacked targets in Israel itself, including Eilat in southern Israel.

At the same time, the Houthis in Yemen have managed to disrupt commercial maritime activity in the Red Sea by attacking US, British and Israeli ships and any vessels heading to Israeli ports. They have also launched many long-range missiles against southern Israel. They, too, claim they are supporting the people of Gaza against the Israeli onslaught. The US and Britain have carried out several aerial attacks against Houthi positions in response.

Sunday's attack took the US by surprise. The fact that the strike took place on Jordanian territory is also essential. President Joe Biden and the Pentagon promised to retaliate, but Republican lawmakers and the right-wing media want him to strike Iran, which has denied any connection to the incident. Tehran said that resistance groups are the ones that have decided to respond to the US military presence in the region, not itself. The White House finds itself in an awkward position, needing to show deterrence while avoiding an open war with Iran and its proxies.

The US has retaliated in the past few weeks with strikes against forces at the Al-Asad and Irbil airbases in Iraq. The most serious was last month's strike on a Kata'ib Hezbollah base in Baghdad, which killed at least one senior official and wounded 18, including civilians. The Iraqi government protested the US strike, calling it an "unacceptable attack on Iraqi sovereignty" that would "harm bilateral relations."

Since then, Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani has requested that negotiations should begin to end the US military presence in Iraq. Meanwhile, US media reports have stated that Washington is also considering pulling out of northeastern Syria. The main question is how the US will retaliate. National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Monday that America is not looking to go to war with Iran, nor does it want to expand the regional conflict. Sunday's attack raises many challenges for the US. First, its military has been in this region for decades, toppling Saddam Hussein and triggering a sectarian war in Iraq, while incriminating itself in war crimes. After destroying Iraq, it allowed Iran to play a crucial role in the country's politics, resulting in what we have today: multiple nonstate actors that are supported by Iran and are ideologically against the US presence,

After destroying Iraq, it allowed Iran to play a crucial role in the country's politics, resulting in what we have today: multiple nonstate actors that are supported by Iran and are ideologically against the US presence, not only in Iraq but the region. Second, the US has launched wars or been involved in them from Afghanistan to Libya and from Yemen to Somalia and Syria, with one clear outcome: the creation of failed states. This has enabled proxy groups and nonstate actors and led to the death or displacement of millions of innocent civilians. Other than triggering wars, the US has had no clear regional message that Washington has refused to understand. The neocons in the US Congress and right-wing media, who believe the US can club together an anti-Iran coalition, triggering another costly war in the region, are not only delusional but simply wrong. The leaders in the area have learned their lessons. "Never again" also means never repeating the mistakes of the past. The Gaza war has been an eye-opener for millions of people around the world. The region's leaders have also absorbed the lessons. The US Middle East policy has delivered chaos and radicalism since the 1990s. America's blind bias in favor of Israel has turned it into an accessory to war crimes and now an allegation of enabling genocide.

The US must stop viewing the region from an Israeli perspective if it wants to build genuine and lasting alliances with countries in this part of the world. Today's leaders are aware of their geopolitical options, opening up to Russia and China while also keeping links to the US. Suppose the US has an agenda for the region. In that case, it must consider what the vast majority of the people of this region want. A resolution to the Palestinian question in a just and viable way would be a significant step in the right direction. A direct attack on Iran should not be on the cards for the US. An all-out regional war is something that helps Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's objective of dragging everyone into a conflict that serves no one's interests but his. Instead, the US should examine its national interests in a fast-changing region, in which leaders opt to resolve their differences through diplomacy. America's 30-year military engagement in the region has been toxic and disruptive. No one here wants to see another war flaring up. Instead, leaders want a durable and just resolution to the core of regional instability; something the Palestinians will accept so that other non-state actors stop using them as an excuse to destabilize the region. Washington needs to rethink its Middle East strategy after Sunday's attack.

Still, the Middle East is changing and leaders are learning the lessons of the past. One immediate outcome of this is that leaders now affirm there will not be any regional stability so long as the Palestinian cause remains unresolved. This is the position of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE, Jordan and other Arab and regional players. This is a strategic objective. It has alienated its traditional allies and created anti-US sentiments across the region. Third, in this latest Israeli aggression on Gaza, the US has sided, as usual, with the aggressor without any consideration of how the people of the region will feel. They may not like Iran and its proxies, but opposition to Israel's bloodbath in Gaza has created so much grassroots support for the so-called resistance front that it also puts pressure on America's allies in the region, which have to answer to their citizens.

Still, the Middle East is changing and leaders are learning the lessons of the past. One immediate outcome of this is that leaders now affirm there will not be any regional stability so long as the Palestinian cause remains unresolved. This is the position of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE, Jordan and other Arab and regional players. This is a strategic objective. It has alienated its traditional allies and created anti-US sentiments across the region. Third, in this latest Israeli aggression on Gaza, the US has sided, as usual, with the aggressor without any consideration of how the people of the region will feel. They may not like Iran and its proxies, but opposition to Israel's bloodbath in Gaza has created so much grassroots support for the so-called resistance front that it also puts pressure on America's allies in the region, which have to answer to their citizens.

Still, the Middle East is changing and leaders are learning the lessons of the past. One immediate outcome of this is that leaders now affirm there will not be any regional stability so long as the Palestinian cause remains unresolved. This is the position of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE, Jordan and other Arab and regional players. This is a strategic objective. It has alienated its traditional allies and created anti-US sentiments across the region. Third, in this latest Israeli aggression on Gaza, the US has sided, as usual, with the aggressor without any consideration of how the people of the region will feel. They may not like Iran and its proxies, but opposition to Israel's bloodbath in Gaza has created so much grassroots support for the so-called resistance front that it also puts pressure on America's allies in the region, which have to answer to their citizens.

Still, the Middle East is changing and leaders are learning the lessons of the past. One immediate outcome of this is that leaders now affirm there will not be any regional stability so long as the Palestinian cause remains unresolved. This is the position of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE, Jordan and other Arab and regional players. This is a strategic objective. It has alienated its traditional allies and created anti-US sentiments across the region. Third, in this latest Israeli aggression on Gaza, the US has sided, as usual, with the aggressor without any consideration of how the people of the region will feel. They may not like Iran and its proxies, but opposition to Israel's bloodbath in Gaza has created so much grassroots support for the so-called resistance front that it also puts pressure on America's allies in the region, which have to answer to their citizens.

Britain facing constitutional crisis

Philip Johnston

PARLIAMENT works in mysterious ways, its wonders to perform. The House of Lords gave the Rwanda Bill a Second Reading on Monday but merely delayed the monumental crunch that is coming over this legislation. A Lib Dem motion to kill the Bill was defeated, but not because there was support in the Lords for the measure. Far from it.

The Government secured a majority for its efforts to send would-be immigrants to the African republic, even though most speakers registered their opposition.

Lord Blunkett, the former home secretary, said peers were being invited to walk into a trap if they voted it down because ministers would say the policy could have worked if only the unelected House had not thwarted their wishes. Rishi Sunak said as much after getting his Bill through the Commons 12 days ago. "The treaty with Rwanda is signed and the legislation which deems Rwanda a safe country has been passed unamended in our elected chamber," he declared. "There is now only one question: will the opposition in the appointed House of Lords try and frustrate the will of the people as expressed by the elected house?"

This is dangerous territory for a Conservative prime minister. Many a crime has been committed in the name of the people, which is the sort of demotic appeal you expect to hear from the Left. His reference to the "appointed House" was a deliberate swipe at its undemocratic make-up, even though many of its members are former ministers put there by Mr Sunak and his predecessors. One of them, Lord Clarke of Nottingham, the former chancellor and three times Tory leadership contender, was having none of it, conjuring up Lord Hailsham's 1976 warning of "an elective dictatorship". He was hitherto a supporter of the Rwanda policy because a credible and effective crackdown on illegal migration was required to reassure the public that we have control over our borders.

If they think we have lost control, that threatens a very nasty change in public attitudes caused by doubts," he said. Lord Clarke was prepared to accept that sending migrants to a safe third country for processing was proportionate. But the Supreme Court changed everything in November when judges ruled Rwanda was not safe because of the risk of further repatriation to a place of possible danger, known as refoulement. This was a finding of fact, though one that relied heavily on evidence from the UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, which could be accused of being parti pris.

The principle of non-refoulement prohibits the expulsion, whether directly or indirectly, of a refugee to a country of persecution. It is enshrined in the 1951 Refugee Convention and the given effect by other international treaties to which the United Kingdom is a party. The obvious remedy is for the Government to pull out of all these treaties, something it is unwilling to do, not least because it would not get through Parliament. Moreover, as the Supreme Court observed, the general prohibition on refoulement binds all states regardless of whether they are party to any treaties that give it

effect. The mass movement of people, which has only just begun, will confront countries in Europe with an increasingly acute dilemma as the years pass. Already they are trying to farm out their obligations under these treaties to other countries, not just Rwanda. Italy is sending asylum seekers to Albania to have their cases heard and processed. If the applicant succeeds in proving a well-founded fear of persecution, they will return to Italy. The British version is that they will remain in Rwanda.

In order for this to be lawful, the Government has declared Rwanda to be safe, whatever the Supreme Court or the UNHCR has said. Its difficulty in making this case has been compounded by the fact that Rwandans have successfully claimed asylum in the UK on the grounds that their home country is unsafe. Politics is full of ironies but the inversion of attitudes to the House of Lords caused by this episode is particularly dramatic. Suddenly, Left-wingers, who have for years derided the Upper chamber as an undemocratic excrescence, now see it as a great bulwark against a ruthless Tory administration prepared to wreck Britain's reputation for upholding the rule of law.

On the other hand, Right-wing traditionalists, who previously would die in a ditch to keep the House of Lords pretty much as it is, want it abolished. The passions raised by the Rwanda Bill have turned normal political discourse on its head. It has so added minds that otherwise sensible people are making stupid decisions and even sillier speeches. Why Mr Sunak decided to pin his entire premiership to the removal of a few hundred (at most) migrants to Rwanda will have historians scratching their heads in perplexity.

We are talking of around 40,000 people crossing the Channel. Yes, they try to jump the queue, get put up in hotels, claim benefits and make false asylum claims. Yes, the Government has to try to stop the traffic. But its failure to do so will simply expose its powerlessness because it is not prepared to do the one thing that would work - return them immediately to the French beaches they came from. Even if the Bill goes through Parliament and flights take off for Rwanda, the numbers involved will be laughably small. Mr Sunak will get no kudos for the simple reason that everyone knows that legal immigration, which the Government can control, is at stratospheric levels. This has caused the population to boom, as the latest ONS figures show, putting pressure on already creaking public services.

To get this Bill on to the statute book will involve more grief than it can possibly merit. The Lib Dem attempt to strangle it at birth failed, but that was just the start. When it goes into committee, amendments will pull its teeth. The Government will try to put them back when the Bill returns to the Commons where more ambushes await from both sides. This is a political mess of the Government's own making and threatens to become a constitutional crisis, even one that triggers a confidence vote in Mr Sunak. Will Rwanda come to be written on his political tombstone?

The Telegraph

Time for EU to show some backbone and stand up to Israel

Ramzy Baroud

THE EU largely stayed silent when Israel began pounding the besieged Gaza Strip with the kind of ferocity that could only lead to genocide. In fact, it remained silent even when the word "genocide" quickly replaced the earlier reference to the "Israel-Hamas war," starting on Oct. 7.

Those familiar with the EU's political discourse and actions regarding Israel and Palestine must already realize that most of its governments have always been on the side of Israel. However, if this is true, what can we make of last week's comments by the EU's foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, when he seemed to lash out at Israel, accusing it of "seeding hate for generations?"

During a joint press conference in Brussels with Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry and EU Commissioner for Enlargement Oliver Varhelyi, Borrell said:

"Israel cannot have the veto right to the self-determination of the Palestinian people." But is Borrell being genuine? His frustration with Tel Aviv stems from the realization that Israel does not take the bloc seriously. He is right. Tel Aviv has never truly seen Brussels as a strong and relevant political actor in comparison to Washington, or even London. Recent months have further exposed this unequal relationship. Soon after the Al-Aqsa Flood operation, European leaders - starting with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and French President Emmanuel Macron - flocked to Tel Aviv to, in the words of Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, reiterate that "Israel has every right to defend itself."

But European support exceeded that of language or political gestures. It also arrived in the form of mili-

tary and intelligence support. "As of Nov. 2, the German government has approved the export of close to 303 million (\$323 million) worth of defense equipment to Israel," Reuters reported, comparing the large sum to the 32 million of defense exports that were approved by Berlin in all of 2022. This is just one example. While the Americans did not shy away from assuming the role of partner in the Gaza war, the EU's position seemed dishonest and, at best, morally inconsistent. For example, an enthusiastic Macron wanted to establish an anti-Daesh-like military coalition to target Hamas, while the leaders of Spain and Belgium jointly called for a permanent ceasefire during a press conference at the Rafah border crossing with Egypt on Nov. 24.

Borrell initially approached the genocidal war from an entirely pro-

Israeli perspective. "I am not a lawyer," he said, when asked in an interview last November whether Israel was committing war crimes in Gaza. A minute later, he asserted that Hamas' Al-Aqsa Flood operation was undoubtedly a war crime.

This is not a simple case of Western double standards. Israel sees the EU as a lackey, even though the bloc, collectively, carries significant economic weight. However, in the case of Israel, it refuses to translate this into political leverage. Until Brussels learns to resolve this dichotomy, it will continue with this kind of bizarre foreign policy. One reason Israel sees the EU as an inferior political actor compared to Washington is because the Europeans have linked much of their foreign policy agenda to America's, which is, in turn, motivated by Tel Aviv's agenda and interests.

This is how it works. When Macron joined Biden in unconditionally supporting Israel at the beginning of the war, Netanyahu remarked that he was "highly appreciative" of the French position. But when, in November, Macron dared criticize Israel's killing of women and babies in Gaza, Netanyahu immediately lashed out, accusing Macron of making "a serious mistake, factually and morally."

Slowly, the EU began developing a somewhat stronger position on Gaza, though certainly not strong enough to demand an end to the war or to threaten consequences. This is why Borrell was keen on the EU's ministerial meeting. But instead of engaging in serious talks, the meeting further highlighted the bloc's irrelevance, at least in the eyes of Israel.

Katz went to the meeting to present plans for an artificial island off the coast of Gaza - likely to displace Palestinians from the Strip - and a railway to India. "I

think the minister could have made better use of his time," Borrell said. Other top EU diplomats said the videos were part of old ideas presented by Katz in a previous role, while they "surprised" others in the room. But the EU diplomats should not be surprised. After all, their governments are the ones that have empowered Israel and disempowered Palestinians over the years. Even now, many of them continue to champion Israel's mass killings in Gaza as Tel Aviv's right to self-defense.

If Borrell truly wishes to develop a political backbone, he should fully back international law and advocate for the use of the EU's massive economic leverage to put pressure on Israel to end its war and its military occupation of Palestine. Failing to do so gives greater credibility to the claim that Brussels, just like Washington, is a direct partner in the Israeli war on the Palestinian people.

Kyiv’s allies need to rethink Ukraine’s victory strategy

THE new year and approaching anniversary of the invasion of Ukraine have put the spotlight on the West's strategy for supporting the country. Many commentators have already stressed that we are approaching a crux, maybe even a climax, in this war. But preventing a Russian victory may require rethinking what success looks like for Ukraine.

Ukraine's long-anticipated 2023 counteroffensive failed. Despite the bravery and skill of the Ukrainian troops, it was never likely to succeed as much as its proponents hoped and predicted. The Ukrainian armed forces were trying to breach heavily fortified, prepared Russian positions, without air superiority or favorable combat ratios. Many of the assault brigades were only recently formed, under-trained and inexperienced. The Ukrainian forces (UAF) lacked the command capacity to coordinate a concentrated combined arms assault. Rather than one major operation, the counteroffensive consisted of a series of small tactical assaults on three axes - Orikhiv, Velyka Novosilka, and Bakhmut - supported by artillery and missile strikes against Russian targets behind the frontlines. Some attacks worked: several villages and small towns, such as Robotyne, Makarivka, and Urozhaine, were liberated. But overall, there were no decisive gains.

Ultimately, Kyiv lacked the combat power to breach Russian defenses. Even if UAF had breached the Surovikin line it seems probable the offensive would have culminated in an urban battle around Tokmak, Melitopol, or Mariupol. They just did not have the combat power or the operational expertise to conduct their forces. Despite horrendous losses of men and materiel, Russia has endured. It has regenerated its force throughout 2023. Putin has raised tens of thousands of new recruits through new conscription measures. As a result, there are estimated to be about 300,000 Russian troops in Ukraine. It has fortified the territory it has taken. It has at least a three-to-one advantage in artillery - and often more.

Ukrainian forces fired 8,000 artillery shells a day during the counteroffensive in the summer; they accounted for 80% of Russian losses. They are now firing 2,000 a day. The Russians, by contrast, are firing 10,000 shells a day. It is imperative that Ukraine wins this war. Russia's aggression has to be resisted. Recently, President Zelensky still defined winning as retaking all Ukraine's stolen territory including the Donbas and Crimea.

Ukraine has the right to its land, and the full reintegration of Ukraine would be desirable in the ideal world. But is it a realistic basis for a coherent strategy for 2024? It seems unlikely. Just

Anthony King

though it may be, a maximalist Ukrainian strategy may be counter-productive. It may be weakening Western support, rather than energizing it. It seems improbable that a 2024 offensive would be any more successful than the one in 2023. The conditions the UAF faces are worse. Combat ratios have decisively shifted in Russia's favor, even if almost all its profes-

Zelensky, they said. Instead, Ukraine inflicted a terrible defeat on Russia in 2022, defending most of its territory and united as a genuine, democratic republic. It won. The fact that it is unlikely to be able to re-integrate the Crimean peninsula or much of Zaporizhzhia and the Donbas cannot take away that remarkable victory. However, to hold onto the victories of 2022,

The Ukrainians should construct a network of citadels and strongpoints in and around frontier towns and villages, so the Russians could only take them at great cost. Those strong points would serve as the bastions from which the Ukrainian army could use artillery and rocket strikes to repel any incursion, supported by special forces raids into the enemy's rear. This is a strategy that was decisive in repelling the initial phase of the invasion, especially around Kyiv, Chernihiv and Kharkiv. At the same time, the Ukrainian forces should seek to attack Russian forces behind the front, targeting headquarters, logistics hubs, and areas where troops are concentrated deep in Russian-held territory. At the same time, the Ukrainians should continue targeting Crimea with strategic artillery, rocket, and drone strikes, supported by naval attack and block against Sevastopol.

sional troops who started this war have been killed or wounded. Including local militia, the Ukrainian army today is a large force, and much bigger than the one which repelled the invasion. Only a fraction of the ranks are occupied by combat troops. Their precise number is unclear, but Ukraine may have about 150,000-200,000 active soldiers (about 30-40 brigades). But these troops are better trained and have much higher morale than their Russian opponents.

Yet the UAF is still outnumbered. Russia has re-equipped its army. Its fortifications have been strengthened. Without a huge increase in Ukrainian troop numbers, firepower, and airpower, it is almost inconceivable that a major offensive could succeed. It may even be unwise to mount it in the first place. Does this mean Ukraine and the West should just give up and admit defeat? Not at all. This war can and has to be won. The realistic assessment that another Ukrainian counteroffensive cannot succeed, recommends only a refinement of strategy - not an admission of failure.

On Feb. 24, when Russian tanks rolled across the border, most observers believed that Ukraine was doomed. Russia would defeat Ukraine's armed forces and depose

Ukraine - and its Western backers - need a new strategy. Instead of pursuing an unrealistic strategy of expelling Russia from the all territory it has taken, the new strategy should focus on consolidating what it has.

An aggressive defensive strategy seems more likely to succeed. Russia may end up keeping the land it has illegally invaded. But the prize of any further aggression against Ukraine would be catastrophic. Ukraine needs to secure the terrain it currently holds and make it impossible for Russia to encroach upon it, or to threaten it again. To repel Russian forces and deter the Kremlin from advancing, Kyiv and its allies need a new strategy. The Ukrainians should construct a network of citadels and strongpoints in and around frontier towns and villages, so the Russians could only take them at great cost. Those strong points would serve as the bastions from which the Ukrainian army could use artillery and rocket strikes to repel any incursion, supported by special forces raids into the enemy's rear. This is a strategy that was decisive in repelling the initial phase of the invasion, especially around Kyiv, Chernihiv and Kharkiv.

At the same time, the Ukrainian forces should seek to attack Russian forces behind the front,

targeting headquarters, logistics hubs, and areas where troops are concentrated deep in Russian-held territory. At the same time, the Ukrainians should continue targeting Crimea with strategic artillery, rocket, and drone strikes, supported by naval attack and block against Sevastopol. Since the summer of 2022, the Ukrainians, masterminded by General Budanov, have carried out attacks on Russian sovereign territory. Some of these attacks, like the assassination of Darya Dugina (the daughter of the notorious Russian nationalist sociologist, Alexander Dugin) and the alleged attacks on the Nord Stream pipeline, have been controversial. However, to maintain pressure on the Kremlin, careful and precise kinetic and cyber strikes against critical national infrastructure in Russia may prove effective, such as the recent attack on the fuel terminal in St. Petersburg.

Ukraine cannot execute this strategy alone. Continued and increased Western support throughout 2024 and into 2025 is imperative here. Without it, Ukraine's victory may descend into a defeat. What should the West do? The West must increase the training of Ukrainian troops. It should accelerate the training and education of staff officers to generate brigade, divisional and corps-level headquarters capable of conducting genuine combined arms operations - not just tactical missions.

The West must increase the production and supply of artillery shells; this is imperative. Kyiv's allies must also increase the supply of advanced missiles, rockets and artillery, as well as fighter aircraft to execute strikes in Ukraine. The provision of air defense systems to protect Ukrainian civilians must also be enhanced. Finally, and most controversially, NATO members must agree to admit Ukraine to the alliance on the day after the war is over. The West has a duty to do this. Even more importantly, NATO membership is the only way to guarantee Ukrainian security in the long term. Before Feb. 24, NATO membership for Ukraine seemed unwise as it could provoke Russia by threatening its strategic access to the Black Sea. The situation has now changed completely. The question is not of Western provocation - but of actively containing and deterring Russia from future attacks.

It is deeply regrettable that the full reintegration of Ukraine's territory is unlikely. Russia's aggression is deplorable, and the deaths and misery it has inflicted cannot be forgotten. But if this war ends in 2025 with most of Ukraine intact and as a thriving member of NATO and eventually the EU, that is hardly a defeat - especially when we think back to February 2022. It is better to follow a successful pragmatic strategy, than one that is morally justified but impractical.

Why modern Russia can’t consign Lenin to history

Boris Bondarev

proletariat.

THERE are few figures in Russian history that are as controversial as the figure of Vladimir Lenin. For some, he is a hero, a luminary of progress. Among supporters of democracy in Russia, he is seen as a symbol of totalitarianism and a direct predecessor to the modern Russian dictatorship.

He is often perceived as a symbol of the error of the Soviet experiment, which some argue should be forgotten as a tragic chapter of history. They see Lenin as the perpetrator of atrocities and the cause of the suffering of millions. But erasing such a hugely influential figure from history would be a mistake.

Since the time of Peter the Great, Russia has been closely linked to European cultural discourse. The works of Tolstoy, Chekhov and Tchaikovsky, developed naturally and harmoniously from the European cultural tradition. Russia also received scientific and philosophical concepts, including Marxism, from outside. The Russian intellectual and creative elite existed purely within the orbit of European culture, enriching but not going beyond it.

The October Revolution, which changed the course of the 20th century, was a new development. It was the most daring attempt in history to create paradise on Earth and build a new classless society. Lenin and his associates sought to implement Marxist ideas in what they believed to be Russia's monstrously unjust society with a fanatical conviction in their rightness and unwillingness to negotiate with anyone. The Russian opposition movement behaves similarly today. However, as we know, instead of the equality and freedom the Bolsheviks promised, a totalitarian system emerged. This was the natural result of an attempt to implement Marxist ideas in conditions that were unsuitable for a successful proletarian revolution. Although Russia was undergoing industrialization, its proletariat - the driving force of the revolution - was still very small. The workers - yesterday's peasants - largely retained peasant views of the world and social order, which were very far from the ideals of the industrial

Obviously, it was much more difficult to build communism under such conditions, which were very different from those described by Marx. Russia had to improvise by trying to create an industrial base and proletariat, which eventually destroyed the peasantry during the collectivization of agriculture.

The Bolsheviks' brutality and their desire to impose their vision on the country at all costs, leading to enormous losses of life, was nothing new in Russia's history. On the contrary, Lenin and his comrades were following the old tradition of the state monopoly of power that had existed in Russia for centuries. Peter the Great, whom the great Russian poet Maximilian Voloshin aptly called "the first Bolshevik," was similarly uncompromising in his methods of reforming Russia.

What the Bolsheviks did was raise the bar of state violence to a new height. They probably saw this as logical in light of the ruthless class struggle against reactionary social strata.

At that time, Europe tried to respond to new social challenges not from the left, as the Communists did, but by experimenting with fascism. It is not without reason that fascism draws inspiration from a fictionalized past. Adolf Hitler weaponized images of Germanic mythology and Wagnerian fantasies, while Benito Mussolini exploited the legacy of Rome. Their ideological successor, President Vladimir Putin, also constantly refers to the past, namely the victory in the Great Patriotic War, looking there for grounds to legitimize his policies.

Meanwhile, Russia sought to shake off the ashes of the old world and cut a window into the beautiful world of the future. It was truly daring and innovative, though doomed to failure. In 1917, hardly anyone foresaw what the idea of building the kingdom of God on earth would really entail.

It would be categorically wrong to erase Lenin from history by declaring the entire Soviet period to have been one big mistake. First, for the simple reason that it is part of our history.

Pretending that it has nothing to do with us is yet another symptom of the forgetfulness that has afflicted Russian society. To be ashamed of one's history is a sign of a shallow mind. Recognizing one's history and drawing lessons from it is what allows society to overcome the past and move forward. Germany, which refuses to forget the lessons of the Third Reich, can serve as a good example.

Second, Lenin is Russia's most recognizable brand. The huge number of countries affected by Lenin's legacy is an asset to Putin, allowing him to seek allies among the countries of the Global South that still have sympathy for the Soviet Union. This asset can and should be used even after Putin's departure to develop the new Russia's relations with these states. The Leninist brand and its instant recognizability can be useful tools of foreign policy and soft power regardless of who sits in the Kremlin.

It is both a reminder that nothing in politics is impossible for people united by common goals who are ready to fight for them and proof that those who believe in nothing and call on others to do nothing because "nothing will ever work" will sooner or later be shamed. Lenin is rightly regarded as one of the greatest figures in political history because he possessed a phenomenal flair and tactical genius. He boldly changed his policies without hesitation when the old ones became irrelevant without ever losing sight of his strategic goal. This one of Lenin's traits could be of great use to the Russian politicians of today.

Finally, the Soviet experiment is Russia's unique gift to humanity. Lenin's legacy serves as a warning to the world about the dangers of pursuing utopian aspirations at any cost, regardless of circumstances, resources, and people's fates. It is also a warning to all political elites. If you cling to your power and privileges, ignoring the public demand for change, change will still happen, you will have to pay for your short-sightedness. And the longer those in power resist those challenges, the more costly they will be.

The Moscow Times

China’s national reunification inevitable

Liu Qiang

strategic goals?

AFTER Democratic Progressive Party candidate Lai Ching-te and his running mate Hsiao Bi-khim won the leadership election in Taiwan recently, some foreign media began claiming the risk of military conflicts across the Taiwan Strait has increased.

China is a big country that has achieved rapid economic and social development, yet it has not realized national reunification. It wants to realize the reunification of the Taiwan island with the motherland through peaceful means, for example, by following the "one country, two systems" principle.

But "Taiwan independence" forces on the island have been opposing this with the help of some countries and by "internationalizing the Taiwan question". This has compelled Beijing to reiterate its position that it does not "renounce the use of force" to achieve the goal of national reunification. The Chinese mainland has been making increasing efforts to settle the Taiwan question. Claiming Beijing has proposed to realize national reunification before the 100th year of the founding of the People's Liberation Army in 2027, the Taiwan authorities have alleged that the mainland would seek reunification using military force only in 2027. So they sought more help from the United States to prevent the inevitability of national reunification.

On its part, the US has been playing the "Taiwan card" and stirring up trouble across the Taiwan Strait. It has also been spreading lies that Beijing seeks to reunify the Taiwan island with the motherland through force before 2027. The year 2027 marks the 100th year of the founding of the PLA, and Beijing has vowed to build the PLA into a world-class military by then. Is it wrong for a country to modernize its military and set special

Washington has been hyping up the Taiwan question and getting increasingly involved in cross-Strait affairs, in order to prevent not only the Chinese nation's reunification but also to distract the American people's attention from burning domestic issues such as a slowing US economy and the widening income gap. What the US has said and done have greatly affected the judgment of the Taiwan authorities on how the mainland would deal with the Taiwan question. Such misjudgments by the Taiwan authorities and their subsequent moves have worsened the situation across the Strait.

One of the dirty tricks of the US in the "balance of military power game" across the Strait is increasing its arms sales to the island. The Joe Biden administration has announced 12 rounds of arms sales to Taiwan, including five in 2023. Although Washington knows that Taiwan, even with US military supplies, cannot change the cross-Strait strategic balance, it continues to sell weapons and military equipment to the island.

Worse, the US claims to help bolster Taiwan's defense and "boost its deterrence" against the mainland, sending the wrong signal to the "Taiwan independence" forces on the island. No wonder outgoing Taiwan leader Tsai Ing-wen said she is proud to spend large sums of money on buying US weapons.

The reunification of Taiwan with the motherland is an inevitable, and irreversible trend. It is only a matter of time before national reunification is achieved. But that does not mean there is a specific timetable for national reunification. That Beijing has vowed to achieve

national reunification before 2027 is a figment of the US' imagination, even though the Chinese government and the Chinese people are determined, more than ever, to realize that goal. But the biggest obstacle to resolving the Taiwan question is the interference of the US. As long as the US adheres to the one-China principle, does not play the "Taiwan card", and stops selling arms to Taiwan and sending the wrong signal to the Taiwan authorities, the Taiwan question can be resolved through peaceful means. A conflict cannot be ruled out if "Taiwan independence" forces go too far. But "peaceful reunification" based on the principle of "one country, two systems" remains the best way of resolving the Taiwan question.

The white paper titled "Taiwan Question and China's Reunification in the New Era", issued by the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council and the State Council Information Office in 2022 said, "the basic policy of upholding One-Country, Two-Systems", is to never "allow any person, any organization, or any political party, at any time or in any form, to separate any part of Chinese territory from China". The white paper also said, "China is firmly committed to peaceful development", and highlighted a series of measures to improve cross-Strait relations and realize peaceful national reunification.

But "Taiwan independence" forces have been opposing the mainland's call for peaceful reunification, challenging the one-China principle, and seeking the US' support to counter the mainland, thus poisoning cross-Strait relations. The newly elected leaders of Taiwan need to better understand the future path, and work for the benefit of the Chinese nation and people.

Providing practical relief

Sun Tianshu

DEBT-FOR-DEVELOPMENT swaps have emerged as a vital debt management strategy since their inception during the Latin American debt crisis of the 1980s. In recent years, they have garnered substantial attention for their potential to revolutionize innovative development financing, foster collaborative development partnerships, and address pressing global issues, including climate change.

In recent years, low and middle-income countries have grappled with liquidity crises brought on by multiple factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical conflicts, food and energy crises, and consecutive interest rate hikes. Some nations have even resorted to temporarily suspending debt repayments and appealing for partial debt relief. In such a challenging context, innovative debt management solutions are urgently needed to break free from the debt impasse but in a way that does not trigger moral hazard.

From the debtor's perspective, debt-for-development swaps address the fundamental constraint of limited fiscal resources and foreign exchange reserves. Under the pressure of debt repayments and tightening liquidity, governments in debt-stricken countries are often compelled to allocate their finite fiscal resources toward servicing their debt rather than investing in public goods and services, such as education, healthcare and environmental protection, with uncertain economic returns and low cost-recovery rates.

Analysis conducted by the United Nations Global Crisis Response Group (GCRG) shows a staggering 3.3 billion people live in countries where government interest expenditures surpass allocations on education or healthcare. At least 19 developing nations find their interest payments exceeding education spending, while 45 nations allocate more resources to servicing debt than to healthcare. Continent-wide statistics show that in Africa, interest expenditures collectively surpass investments in education and healthcare, while in Asia and Oceania, developing nations (excluding China) divert more funds toward interest payments than healthcare spending. Additionally, scholars and devel-

opment aid organizations have brought attention to the "dual vulnerability" of developing countries, sometimes referred to as the "climate-finance trap". This term encapsulates the simultaneous existence of climate vulnerability and macroeconomic financial fragility, leading to a detrimental feedback loop. In the face of high interest costs and the pressure on foreign exchange reserves and liquidity stemming from concentrated debt maturities, climate-vulnerable nations find themselves unable to allocate sufficient fiscal resources for domestic climate resilience efforts. Consequently, they are more likely to confront the dual challenge of simultaneously servicing debt and funding disaster relief.

Debt-for-development swaps offer a twofold solution: extending preferential debt relief to debtor nations and permitting them to repay their debts by channeling their domestic currency into their domestic development accounts. This alleviates the pressure on foreign exchange reserves, serves as a hedge against the escalating debt costs and interest expenditures caused by the interest rate hikes of major economies, and encourages debtors to direct their funds toward commercial and livelihood sectors that promise substantial long-term development benefits. In doing so, debt-for-development swaps help prevent shortsighted behavior.

Debt-for-development swaps have gained widespread attention, receiving not only endorsements from multilateral organizations such as the United Nations and the International Monetary Fund but also increasing recognition from debtor nation governments. The year 2023 bore witness to landmark debt-for-development swap transactions, including the world's largest deal (Ecuador's \$1.6 billion debt-for-nature deal) and Africa's inaugural transaction (Gabon's \$500 million deal). At COP28, several bilateral and multilateral development institutions, such as the European Investment Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, announced their intentions to establish dedicated working groups to scale up the "debt-for-nature" mechanism. Countries such as Germany, Italy

and Belgium also launched bilateral debt-for-development swap agreements with developing countries such as Egypt and Mozambique.

With China emerging as the largest bilateral creditor for certain developing nations, there has also been a growing discourse on the prospects of implementing debt-for-development swaps in China's debt management practices. In October 2023, during the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, the China International Development Cooperation Agency signed a memorandum of understanding on a debt-for-development swap with the Egyptian Ministry of International Cooperation.

Nevertheless, as international societies celebrate the rise of debt-for-development swaps, we must also recognize the lingering gap between its vision and practical implementation. The total amount of debt managed through debt-for-development swap mechanism, either since its inception or in individual transactions, remains limited. Debt-for-development swaps often require complex interdepartmental coordination, rendering their execution a relatively sluggish process. Despite the numerous transactions witnessed and China's pioneering role as an emerging bilateral creditor, debt-for-development swaps demand continued research to address how to manage the expectations while simultaneously enhancing their scale, efficiency and effectiveness. Several crucial aspects merit profound consideration:

"What to swap" pertains to the selection of the type of debt suitable for a swap and the mobilization of necessary transaction funds. Analyses citing data on public and publicly guaranteed debt volumes suggest that converting public debt at risk of default into financing for nature under debt swap model could yield substantial global benefits for ecosystem conservation. However, the choice of debt eligible for swap is a meticulous process, irrespective of whether the creditor is bilateral, multilateral or a private sector bondholder. The Houston Terms introduced by the Paris Club in 1990 have precisely defined the scope of debt conversion - 20 percent of the



CDWP okays Rs2 bln project, recommends 3 projects worth Rs136.6 bln 3 to ECNEC

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Central Development Working Party (CDWP) here on Thursday approved a development project worth Rs.2 billion and recommended three projects worth Rs. 136.660 billion to the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) for further consideration.

The CDWP meeting was chaired by Deputy Chairman Planning Commission Mohammad Jehanzeb Khan while among others, it was attended by Secretary Planning, Awaiz Manzoor Sumra, senior officials from Planning Commission and Federal Ministries and

Divisions and Chairman ACS (Dev) from provincial governments.

CDWP considered projects related to energy, physical planning housing and transport and communications sectors were considered in the meeting.

The forum approved a project related to the physical planning and housing sector, specifically focusing on the "Construction of Litigants Facilitation Center for Litigants of District Courts in Sector G-10/1 Islamabad," with a cost of Rs. 1,989,990 million. The primary objective of the project is to establish a facility catering to the needs of litigants and lawyers. It will include vari-

ous amenities such as the Litigants Facilitation Center, Cafeteria, Multipurpose Hall, Banks, Dispensary, Shop, Bar Room (Male and Female), Prayer Hall, Library and Day Care, Office of IBA and IBC, along with Soft & Hard Landscaping and Internal Road.

A project related to Energy sector under the title "Expansion of 48MW Jagran Hydropower Station (Phase-II) in District Neelum, AJ&K (Revised), with a cost of Rs. 14,744 million has been considered and recommended to ECNEC for further consideration. The Power Development Organization of the Government of Azad

Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) is designated for the operations and maintenance of the project.

The financing structure involves Rs. 12,717.764 million to be sourced from AFD, while the remaining Rs. 1,277.753 million is proposed to be funded through the Public Sector Development Program (PSDP). The Ministry of Communications presented a project in the Transport & Communication sector titled "2nd Carriageway Torkham Jalalabad Road Project, Afghanistan," with a cost of Rs. 16,465.883 million, which was recommended to ECNEC for further consideration.

Adamjee Life collaborates with Kiran Foundation to empower future business leaders

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Adamjee Life, a leading life insurance company, is proud to announce its collaboration with the Kiran Foundation, a renowned non-profit organization dedicated to nurturing young minds, education and vocational training. In an endeavor to foster entrepreneurship, Adamjee Life awarded to participants of the 'Entrepreneurship Program', by providing support for their business start-ups, thereby facilitating the transformation of innovative ideas into successful ventures. The three winners were as (1) Uroosa Atif (2) Hunain Rizwan and (3) Mubashara Muhammad Hanif.

Driven by ambition, this program was curated by two students that was led by Alisha Tawawalla and assisted by Fatima Zehra; students at Karachi Grammar School, who initiated the 'Entrepreneurship Program' at the Kiran



Foundation. Their aim was to inspire the local community and bolster small businesses within the residents of Lyari. The Capital raised through this initiative was utilized as seed funding for three successful members selected from this program.

Nabeela Darugar, Head of Corporate Sales and Marketing at Adamjee Life, conveyed her enthusiastic endorsement for the collaboration with Kiran

Foundation and stated; "We are committed to foster a culture that champions innovation and entrepreneurial pursuits without any bias. By engaging with the participants and recognizing their innovative ideas, we aim to support and inspire the underprivileged community and help them gain financial freedom as they become a contributing part of the business ecosystem."

Sabeen Naz, Principal of DCTO Campus at Kiran Foundation, expressed her excitement about the collaboration, stating, "Our partnership with Adamjee Life underscores our joint dedication to nurturing the future leaders of our nation. Our collective goal is to empower people with essential knowledge and skills, preparing them to make meaningful contributions to the country."

Fly Jinnah announces the launch of International Operations

F.P Report

KARACHI: Fly Jinnah, Pakistan's low-cost carrier, announces the commencement of its international operations with the launch of its inaugural flight connecting Pakistan's capital city Islamabad with the city of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates starting from February 17th, 2024. This step marks a significant milestone in the carrier's growth journey after a successful year of serving domestic routes in Pakistan.

Fly Jinnah will connect both cities with non-stop double daily flights, offering customers seamless and convenient travel options. The new service will also provide customers in Islamabad with the opportunity for further connectivity via Sharjah Airport's wide network.

Schedule: Islamabad – Sharjah (all times local):

Flight Departure/Time

Arrival Time

Aircraft Frequency

9P 740 Islamabad

06:50 Sharjah
Airbus A320
9P 741 Sharjah
Islamabad
Airbus A320
9P 742 Islamabad
19:55 Sharjah
Airbus A320
9P 743 Sharjah
Islamabad
Airbus A320
03:25
Daily

Fly Jinnah added two new Airbus A320 aircraft to its existing fleet to support the launch of its international operations.

This strategic expansion brings the total number of aircraft in Fly Jinnah's fleet to five, enhancing the airline's capacity to cater to the increasing demand for reliable and affordable air travel.

Commenting on this significant development, Fly Jinnah's spokesperson said: "Fly Jinnah's fleet expansion, coupled with the launch of international operations, signifies a strategic move towards offering customers more choices for convenient travel options. This step signi-

fies a milestone for Fly Jinnah, and we are glad to start our international operation by connecting Pakistan's capital city with Sharjah, the cultural city of the UAE. The start of this service not only underscores our dedication to providing our customers with affordable air travel options but also reflects our commitment to further contribute to the strong economic and trade ties between both nations".

Sharjah is the third-largest city in the United Arab Emirates and a vibrant hub in the Gulf region known for offering an inviting combination of culture, heritage, art and outdoor activities. Sharjah city will now be easily accessible to Fly Jinnah passengers, providing them with an array of travel choices.

Fly Jinnah currently connects five major cities in Pakistan, namely Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Peshawar, and Quetta, in addition to the newly

launched destination Sharjah in the UAE. Operating a fleet of five modern Airbus A320 aircraft, the airline is committed to providing passengers with exceptional travel experiences.

In addition to extra comfort provided by the most generous seat-pitch of any economy cabin, the carrier offers affordable and value-driven travel experiences through "SkyCafe" onboard menu where passengers can enjoy a wide variety of delicacies between snacks, sandwiches, and meals at affordable prices. The aircraft is also equipped with "SkyTime", a free in-flight streaming service that allows passengers to stream a wide selection of entertainment directly to their devices.

Customers can now book their flights by visiting Fly Jinnah's website (www.flyjinnah.com), by calling the call centre (111-000-035) or through travel agencies.

ICCI and Bahria University to collaborate to promote entrepreneurship

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) and Bahria University will collaborate to promote entrepreneurship and improve the competitiveness of the industrial sector for achieving sustainable economic development in the country.

Consensus to this effort was developed in a meeting between President ICCI Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari and Rector, Bahria University Vice Admiral (R) Asif Khaliq, an ICCI news release said. On the occasion, Vice Admiral (R) Asif Khaliq, Rector, Bahria University briefed the ICCI head about the initiatives of his institution. He said that Bahria is working to groom today's youth into tomorrow's leaders.



ISLAMABAD: The CDWP meeting presides over by Deputy Chairman Planning Commission Mohammad Jehanzeb Khan.

'Pakistan's new currency banknotes to be introduced in next 2 years'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Governor at State Bank of Pakistan Saleem Ullah Thursday disclosed that new banknotes with improved security features will be introduced in the next two years where SBP has announced an art competition to engage local artists, designers, and art students in shaping the visual identity of the upcoming currency.

In an exclusive interview with a private news channel, he said that this vision-

ary initiative comes as part of SBP's commitment to revamp the existing banknote series and address concerns related to counterfeit currency circulation within the country.

He said that it was an "established practice" to introduce new banknotes every 15 to 20 years for security purposes, after 2005 Pakistan will soon introduce easy and technology-based standard currency notes to facilitate the public.

He said that local artists,

designers, and art students will be eligible to participate in the art competition.

The designs could be on the themes of social and cultural identities, diversity, climate change and environment protection, economic development, natural landscapes, architectural heritage and national symbols, he mentioned.

The designs could be submitted by March 11, after which a jury of "reputed artists" will recommend six designs for each denomination, he further added.

The rollout of new banknotes is expected to be completed "within the next two years," he highlighted.

Replying to a question, he said that State Bank is ensuring an adequate supply of good quality banknotes across the country, adding, we have run various awareness drives for the public to recognize the original banknotes. He also termed the introduction of currency notes with new security features as a "positive development".

Chicken, eggs prices reach at Rs 460 per kg, Rs 415 per dozen

ISLAMABAD (APP): The price of poultry chicken reached Rs 460 per kg and the price of poultry eggs reached Rs 415 per dozen in the open market in the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

The meat of the poultry chicken has reached Rs 800 to 810 per kg in the open market, according to the survey conducted by APP here on Thursday.

The price of poultry chickens and eggs has been going above Rs 415 to 420 per kg and dozen for the past few months, which is getting away from the purchasing power of consumers day by day.

The prices of poultry items have increased by 20

percent in the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi during the last one month, which has created huge volatility in the market.

According to the market survey, during the last three in the twin cities, a 25 per cent increase was witnessed in the price of poultry chicken, while as same as 35 per cent increase in the price of poultry eggs in the same period.

Meanwhile, talking to APP, former Chairman of the Pakistan Poultry Association (PPA), Dr Sajjad Arshad said that the increase in the current prices of poultry was due to demand and supply issues.

He said that the increase

in poultry business inputs and cost of doing business was seen across the country due to which the market was in crisis.

He said that many people related to the chicken business in the country were affected by the current crisis and especially small businesses and poultry farms were closed, adding the poultry business in the four provinces including Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is suffering from the current economic crisis.

Sajjad said that the country's economic conditions are also an important issue and the poultry feed ingredients imported from foreign countries are very

expensive, in which soybean is important.

He said that many soybean ships have stopped at Karachi port, which has an inevitable impact on poultry prices.

Pakistan Poultry Association (PPA) has also called for a further increase in the prices of chicken and there was an increase observed in the prices of poultry items in the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

On this occasion, poultry feed industrialist and Ex. President of Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Poultry industrialist, Dr. Sarosh said that soybean is included in the basic ingredients of poultry feed.

Trade deficit narrows to \$1.879 billion in January 2024

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Interior Commerce and Industries, Dr. Gohar Ejaz on Thursday said that trade deficit narrowed to \$1.879 billion in January 2024 from \$2.689 billion in January 2023.

This is a substantial improvement from last year, said a press release issued by the Ministry of Commerce here.

Caretaker Federal Minister for Interior, Commerce and Industries, Dr. Gohar Ejaz, is

announcing a positive trend in Pakistan's exports. He said: "Pakistan's Exports in Jan 2024 have increased by 26.9% to \$2.786 billion from \$2.195 billion in Jan 2023." Dr Gohar said that imports during the same period decreased by 4.5% to \$4.665 billion from \$4.884 billion.

The caretaker minister said that Pakistan's global trade figures for the period of July 2023 - January 2024, show that Pakistan is steadily expanding its inter-

national trade footprint.

Exports totaled \$17.766 billion, up 12% from \$15.831 billion during the same period in the previous Financial Year (FY), he said. He further said that Imports contracted by 16% to \$30.010 billion as compared to \$35.836 billion in the same period in the last FY. The overall trade deficit has decreased by 39% to \$12.244 billion as compared to \$20.005 in the previous year, he added. In absolute terms, during July-Jan 2024, exports increased

by almost \$2 billion, and Imports decreased by \$6 billion, and the trade deficit contracted by \$7.8 billion.

He said: "These positive trends reflect our government's unwavering commitment to promoting trade and economic growth. We will continue to implement policies that support our exporters, diversify our export base, and enhance trade facilitation. I am confident that Pakistan is on the right track to achieving its trade goals and becoming a leading player in the global economy."

Most Asian markets retreat as Fed crushes March rate cut hope

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Most Asian equities fell Thursday, tracking a sell-off on Wall Street after the Federal Reserve poured cold water on hopes for a March interest rate cut.

The downbeat sentiment was compounded by disappointing earnings from US titans Microsoft and Alphabet, which pumelled the tech sector, while investors were also eyeing developments in the Evergrande crisis after its liquidation order by a Hong Kong court this week.

After a much-anticipated meeting, Fed policymakers acknowledged that inflation was going in the right direction and expected to begin lowering borrowing costs this year from their two-decade highs.

However, they said the board was unlikely to start cutting "until it has gained greater confidence that inflation is moving sustainably" towards its two per cent target.

Boss Jerome Powell said after the gathering that "almost everyone" favoured a step down this year, but added, "I don't think it's likely that the committee will reach a level of confidence by the time of the March meeting to identify March as the time to cut". Ahead of the announcement, market bets on a March cut were about 50-50, and observers said the comments were seen as less dovish than expected.

PGIM Fixed Income's Greg Peters said that while inflation was well down from the four-decade highs seen in 2022, the Fed's work would likely get harder now that more market volatility could be expected. "Given the underlying strength in the economy, and the ability for labour markets to seemingly shrug off higher interest rates, the Fed remains more focused on its inflation mandate than on the job market," said Tai Hui at JP Morgan Asset Management.

"It does appear that the balance of risks is skewed towards inflation remaining sticky rather than the economy falling into recession."

After a broadly disappointing January for the region's markets, the news meant February got off to an inauspicious start with Tokyo, Shanghai, Sydney, Singapore, Taipei, Manila and Jakarta all down.

Hong Kong rose after tanking more than three percent in the previous two days, while Seoul and Wellington were also up. "Interest rates took the elevator going up -- but are going to take the stairs coming down," said Greg McBride of Bankrate.

"The Federal Reserve is getting closer to the first interest rate cut, but we're not there yet."

Christian Scherrmann at DWS expected the Fed to provide guidance on its plans at the March meeting and foresaw a reduction in the second quarter.

Investors are now await-

ing the release of closely watched US jobs data on Friday, which will give a fresh idea about the state of the world's top economy. That comes after payroll firm ADP said the private sector created fewer posts than expected last month.

Apple, Amazon and Facebook owner Meta are also due to report over the next couple of days.

Tokyo - Nikkei 225: DOWN 0.7 percent at 36,024.29 (break)

Hong Kong - Hang Seng Index: UP 1.3 percent at 15,689.99

Shanghai - Composite: DOWN 0.3 percent at 2,780.40

Dollar/yen: DOWN at 146.53 yen from 146.89 yen on Wednesday

Pound/dollar: UP at \$1.2694 from \$1.2685

Euro/dollar: DOWN at \$1.0818 from \$1.0821

Euro/pound: DOWN at 0.8522 from 0.8525 pence

West Texas Intermediate: UP 0.8 percent at \$76.45 per barrel

The Frontier Post classified@s

TO ADVERTISE IN The Frontier Post

For Classified advertisements please contact

Mobile: +92-334-1001900

Email: shoabib@thefrontierpost.com

COURT NOTICES

BUNER

IN the Court of Qaisar Khan Afridi Additional District Judge II/Azafi Zila Qazi Buner at Daggar. Appeal No. 67/13, Institution 24/6/2023. Date of hearing: 16/2/2024. Mst. Fareeda Begum VS Mashoor Rehman etc. Notice to no. 2/2.Hakimur Rehman. 2/4.Sajidur Rehman/s/o Bakhtur Rehman. 5/2.Abdul Wahid s/o Rehman Bibi. 5/3.Mst. Shazia

d/o Rehmana Bibi (late). 7/4.Badam Pari d/o Mst Sheren Zara (late). 24.Gul Rehman son.33.Zakir s/o Shamsheer. 36/2.Nasebur Rehman. 36/3.Javedur Rehman sons of Saifur Rehman. 38/2. Mohamad Tahir s/o Said Ghafor. 55. Bakhti Afsars/o Fazal Alem.66. Suleman. 67.Farman.69. Jihanzeb Gul. 70.Parvez Gul.71.Iqbal Husain sons of Ashraf Gul.72.Mst Nargas d/o Ashraf Gul. 75/2.Abdul Rehman. 75/3.Naemur Rehman sons of Abdul Malok resident of Elai teshel Daggar district Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through duly authorized agent or pleader in the court at 9 am dated 16/2/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

SWAT

In the court of Fasih-ur-Rehman civil judge III/Ilaqa Qazi kabal district Swat. case # 46/1 Institution 29/03/2024. Next Hearing date. 22/02/2024. Mohtaj s/o yaray r/o Asharay shah deheri VS Rahim dil. Notice to. Defendant.(2) Abdur Rauf(3) Muhammad Haneefa sons Muhammad Azeem(1/8) Akram sons Rahamdil r/o shah deheri teshil kabal district Swat. In above mentioned case the respondent can't be served in the ordinary way, it is therefore proclaimed that if said respondents will not appear personally or through duly authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8:30 am dated 22/02/2024. ex-parte proceeding will be held against the mentioned respondents under my hand and seal of this court.



In brief

National Students Olympic Games

ISLAMABAD (APP): The opening ceremony of National Students Olympic Games 2024 was held here at the Liaquat Gymnasium of Pakistan Sports Complex on Thursday. Teams of students from different educational institutions from across the country were participating in the mega event. The National Games would continue till February 5. Games including volleyball, netball, table tennis, futsal, chess, basketball, gymnastics and other athletics competitions would be held in the National Games. The players who would win in the National Games will get the opportunity to play at international level.

Bayern advance Zaragoza signing

MUNICH (APP): Injury-hit Bayern Munich successfully brought forward the signing of Spain winger Bryan Zaragoza from La Liga club Granada, the German club announced on Thursday. The 22-year-old officially arrives on a loan until the summer, after which the previous deal, which runs until 2029, will come into effect. Bayern paid a reported 19 million euros (\$21 million) to sign the winger, which includes a four-million euro loan fee. Bayern were under pressure to add to their attacking options, with forwards Serge Gnabry and Kingsley Coman expected to be out for several weeks with long-term injuries. "In football you always have to be flexible and so we've reacted to the current situation," Bayern sporting director Christoph Freund said in a statement. Signed in December, Zaragoza was set to join the German champions at the end of the season, but has completed a medical in Munich and will be available for Saturday's home clash with Borussia Moenchengladbach. "I'm moving to Bayern to grow here at one of the biggest clubs in the world," Zaragoza said in a statement.

'Aggression key to halt Test slide'

C O L O M B O (Agencies): Sri Lanka needs more on-field aggression to reestablish its Test prowess, new captain Dhananjaya de Silva said Thursday ahead of their one-off red-ball match against Afghanistan. The island nation is dead last on the World Test Championship (WTC) rankings and their last match in October at the same ground saw a humiliating innings and 222-run loss to Pakistan in their worst ever home defeat. They slipped to eighth in the global Test rankings last week after Australia's loss at home to the West Indies, and de Silva said his side had failed to make an impact with their cautious play. "I have been telling the guys the last few days the need to play aggressive cricket," he told reporters. "Test matches are won by taking 20 wickets so you can't be defensive in your mindset. You've got to set up attacking fields." Sri Lanka's first Test for the year starts Friday in Colombo and is not part of the World Test Championship but offers a valuable opportunity to trial the team's overhaul. De Silva was one of three captains appointed last month to lead Sri Lanka's Test, ODI and T20 teams – the first time the island has had separate skipper for all three formats. The middle-order batsman and handy off-spinner takes charge ahead of a full tour slate for the year including a three-Test series in England.

Statistical Review of the National Women's T20 Tournament 2023-24

RAWALPINDI (APP): Lahore and Karachi were declared joint champions of the National Women's T20 Tournament 2023-24 after the final was called off owing to rain. Leading up to the final, 30 matches were played in a double-round robin format, with all six teams featuring in 10 matches each.

Lahore ended the league stage with 10 wins from 10 games, earning 20 points. Karachi and Rawalpindi, with six wins each, had 12 points and were next on the table – with Karachi's superior NRR edging them over Rawalpindi to second position.

Multan earned 10 points, after winning five games and were fourth on the table while fifth-placed Quetta, with three victories, had six points to their name. Peshawar could not register a win and ended the tournament bottom of the table.

Top performers

Rawalpindi captain Aliya Riaz and Multan captain Gull Feroza were jointly awarded players of the tournament.

Aliya was the third-highest run-getter, amassing 370 runs in the competition. Her tally included an undefeated century that came off 53 balls and three half-centuries, one of which she completed in 16 deliveries. Striking at 158.80 in the tournament, she struck 16 maximums – the most

by any batter in the tournament – and 48 boundaries. Aliya also bagged 10 wickets at an average of 24.70 at an economy rate of 6.96.

Wicketkeeper-batter Gull Feroza, who was the second-highest run-scorer, got 479 runs in 10 games on the back of five fifties. She struck 60 boundaries and one six while striking at 114.05. She also had five dismissals behind the stumps.

Lahore's opening batter Sidra Amin, recipient of the best batter of the tournament award, led the run-charts. In 10 games, she amassed 494 runs while striking at 143.60, including an unbeaten century and three half-centuries. She struck 70 boundaries – the most by any player in the tournament – and nine sixes.

The other two centuries in the tournament were Sadaf Shamas (106 not out against Peshawar) and Ayesha Zafar (113 against Multan).

Opening batter Javeria Khan top-scored for Karachi, getting 352 in 10 games at a strike-rate of 110.34, with two half-centuries. Tuba Hassan finished as the most successful batter for Quetta, getting 267 in nine matches while striking at 143.55 with two fifties. Opener Momina Riasat, with 147 in 10 games, was Peshawar's most prolific batter. Lahore wicket-keeper Sidra Nawaz was brilliant behind the

stumps with 15 dismissals, including nine stumpings and six catches and was declared tournament's best wicket-keeper. Sidra Amin, with eight catches, was the most successful fielder in the tournament. Karachi captain, Fatima Sana, with six catches was second on the list.

Lahore's leg-spinner Ghulam Fatima was named the best bowler of the tournament after she finished on top of the wickets column. She had 21 wickets in 10 games at an average of 8.24 and an economy rate of 4.44. Her teammate left-arm spinner Nashra Sundhu had 19 wickets in 10 games at an average of 10.42 and economy rate of 5.38, including the only five-wicket haul of the tournament. She also bowled six maiden overs – the most by any bowler in the tournament.

Syeda Aroob Shah had the most wickets for Karachi – picking up 14 wickets in 10 games averaging 12.36 with an economy rate of 5.09. Tania Saeed took 13 wickets in 10 games, with an average of 14.08 and was the leading wicket-taker for Rawalpindi. Noor-ul-Iman was the top wicket-taker for Multan, picking up nine wickets at an average of 18, registering one four-wicket haul. Tuba grabbed eight wickets, highest for Quetta, in nine games, averaging 25.63 with an economy rate of 7.32.

Goalkeeping woes threaten Japan's Asian Cup hopes



DOHA (APP): Japan's Asian Cup risks being fatally undermined by coach Hajime Moriarty's reliance on an error-prone rookie goalkeeper and he has left himself with no convincing alternatives.

The pre-tournament favourites face Iran on Saturday in the quarter-finals but serious questions hang over 21-year-old Zion Suzuki, whose confidence looks shot. Japan have yet to keep a clean sheet in Qatar and the goalkeeper's mistakes have cost them at least one goal in every game so far.

Suzuki, whose father is Ghanaian-American and mother Japanese, has been racially abused online.

But even if Moriarty wanted to take Suzuki out of the firing line, he has left

himself with two backups who have only one international cap between them.

The coach is paying the price for failing to settle on a number one before the tournament and now faces a decision whether to stick or twist against Iran. Suzuki, in his eighth appearance for Japan, was involved in a mix-up with a team-mate that led to an own goal in the 3-1 win over Bahrain in the last 16 on Wednesday.

Writing in Nikkan Sports, columnist Sergio Echigo said Suzuki had become "a concern".

"He's not so good at dealing with balls played in from the wings," he wrote.

"If you look at these four games, his positioning, judgement, timing and hand-eye co-ordination have all been off."

Suzuki plays for Belgian side Sint-Truiden and went into the Asian Cup with only four international appearances under his belt.

Of the two other goalkeepers in Moriarty's squad, Daiya Maekawa has one cap and Taishi Brandon Nozawa has yet to make his Japan debut. The coach has used five different goalkeepers since Japan's last 16 exit at the 2022 World Cup just over a year ago.

Of those, Sanfrece Hiroshima's Keisuke Osako is currently injured but Europe-based pair Daniel Schmidt and Kosuke Nakamura were left out of the Asian Cup squad.

Shuichi Gonda has not featured at all since playing for Japan at the World Cup, with Moriarty ruling him out on the grounds that he plays in the J-League second division.

Rotating cast

Speaking after Japan qualified for the Asian Cup last 16, Moriarty said he had made his choice based on the "past, present and future". "Zion has been playing regularly in Europe and I think he was the only one -- he was in the best condition," said Moriarty. "There are others in

Europe but they weren't getting regular games. If you look at the J-League goalkeepers, they were all in their off-season."

Japan have never had a clearly established number one goalkeeper since Moriarty took over in 2018. Eiji Kawashima played at three World Cups and hung on to compete with Gonda and Schmidt for the starting job in the 2022 edition.

Now Moriarty finds himself with an inexperienced group to choose from as Japan chase a record-extending fifth Asian Cup.

He made Suzuki his number one only two games before the tournament kicked off. "If I asked everyone to choose who is the number one, two and three, I think everyone would have a different answer," said Moriarty.

Suzuki has faced up to his critics, accepting that he is "held to a higher standard" as Japan's number one. The columnist Echigo said that Suzuki should "practise penalties because that's how Japan went out of the World Cup. "With penalties the ball comes straight at you, so maybe that's where Suzuki's strengths lie."

Babar Azam credits Sarfaraz Ahmed for his success

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Former Pakistan captain Babar Azam credited his predecessor Sarfaraz Ahmed for his success in international cricket and emergence as one of the top batters in the world currently.

Babar hosted a Space session on X, formerly Twitter, and answered the questions from his fans, submitted by using the hashtag "Ask Babar".

"Are you as excited as I am for the live Twitter Space? I'll be answering questions already submitted using #AskBabar. Send your questions and tune in. I will answer as many questions as possible,"

wrote Babar.

While answering the questions Babar Azam opened up on his relationship with Sarfaraz Ahmed and asserted that the latter played a major role in his success.

"[Sarfaraz Ahmed] backed me and supported me a lot. Wherever I am now, is because of him," said Babar.

Remember, Babar made his T20I debut for Pakistan under Sarfaraz's captaincy and received notable support from then-captain Sarfaraz, especially in the longest format.

Babar Azam continued to reveal about his bond with Sarfaraz Ahmed and

shared that the wicket-keeper batter has immense love for his bats.

"Saifi bhai likes my bats a lot and he always says that it's my bat now and you should choose another one for the match," reveals Babar.

In an interview last year, Sarfaraz Ahmed also asserted that the two cricketers share a strong relationship.

"My relationship with Babar, Rizwan and other players is very good. We played together for five years. Babar, Imam, Hassan, Shadab, Faheem, Ruman, Anwar, we all share a very good bond," he shared.



BERLIN: Neil Robertson plays a shot in the third round match against Joe Perry on day four of 2024 BetVictor German Masters at Tempodrom.

Pak taekwondo athletes training camp concludes in Sharjah

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 15-day training camp of Pakistani athletes for the 11th Al-Fujairah Open Taekwondo Championship to be played in Al-Fujairah of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) from February 4 to 6 has concluded in Sharjah on Thursday.

In the camp, the national players were trained by Pakistan's Iranian-born coach Master Yusuf Karami, said a press release.

The national squad for the Al Fujairah Open includes Haroon Khan, Hamza Omar Saeed,

Shahzaib Khan, Muhammad Arbaz Khan, Mazhar Abbas, Nauman and Ehtishamul Haq.

Omar Saeed is the Team Leader, Ashfaq Ahmed Manager, Yusuf Karami Head Coach, Zubair Macha will be the coordinator and Faisal Butt will be the physio.

After participating in the Al Fujairah Open, the Pakistan Taekwondo team would participate in the Fajr Open Taekwondo Championship held in Tehran from February 12 to 15, in addition to the World Taekwondo

President Asia Cup from February 16 to 19 in Tehran and then from February 21 to 22 will take part in the Asian Club Taekwondo championship.

Regarding the event, national players Haroon Khan and Hamza Saeed said in the 15-day training camp in Sharjah, our coaches provided complete awareness of the modern training of the sport of Taekwondo and the new rules and regulations related to the sport. We are fully prepared but will not take any fight lightly, they said.

Football Australia investigating 'possible data breach'

MELBOURNE (Agencies): Football Australia (FA) said they are investigating a possible data breach following a report in a cybersecurity publication that players' passports, contracts and other personal information may have been leaked online.

The report, published by Cybernews.com on Wednesday, said the soccer governing body had also potentially exposed ticket buyers' personal data and that "human error" was the most likely reason for the leak. "Nevertheless, the mistake represents a critical data exposure incident," it said.

FA said in a statement on Thursday it was aware of the reports of a "possible data breach" and was investigating the matter as a priority.

"Football Australia takes the security of all its stakeholders seriously," the statement said. "We will keep our stakeholders updated as we establish more details."

The report in Cybernews, which describes itself as an independent, online publication which discloses cybersecurity threats, said FA had enabled access to 127 "digital storage containers", including one which was left completely unprotected and contained players' passports and contracts.

It said FA had fixed the issue after being alerted by Cybernews.

Durant leads Suns to victory on return to Nets



NEW YORK (Agencies): Kevin Durant's 33 points inspired the Phoenix Suns to a 136-120 victory on his return to the Brooklyn Nets.

Two-time NBA champion Durant, who requested a trade to the Suns last season, was cheered when a tribute video was shown before the game but booed once the match started.

He also made eight assists, five rebounds and two blocks at Barclays Center in New York.

"Even though I love these people here, I love to shut them up," he said.

Durant spent more than three years at the Nets before joining the Suns in January 2023 as part of a trade in which Mikal Bridges, Cam Johnson and four first-round picks left Phoenix.

Durant shared a coach embrace with Nets coach Jacques Vaughn and several former team-mates after the game. Jusuf Nurkic scored 28 points and Devin Booker 22 for the Suns, who denied the Nets a third straight win. The Suns are sixth in the Western Conference and the Nets 11th in the Eastern.

Anfernee Simons scored

24 points as the Portland Trail Blazers spoiled Damian Lillard's return with a 119-116 home win over the Milwaukee Bucks.

Kawhi Leonard contributed 31 points and nine rebounds before sitting out the fourth quarter as the Los Angeles Clippers won 125-109 at the Washington Wizards. Donovan Mitchell scored 20 of his 45 points in the fourth quarter to help the Cleveland Cavaliers see off the Detroit Pistons 128-121.

Coby White scored 35 points as the Chicago Bulls beat the Charlotte Hornets 117-110, while Jimmy Butler's 31 points led the Miami Heat to a 115-106 win over the Sacramento Kings that ended a seven-game losing streak.

The Oklahoma City Thunder triumphed 105-100 over the Denver Nuggets thanks to 34 points from Shai Gilgeous-Alexander. The Orlando Magic beat the San Antonio Spurs 108-98, the Minnesota Timberwolves claimed a 121-87 victory over the Dallas Mavericks, and the New Orleans Pelicans ended a three-game losing run by overcoming the Houston Rockets 110-99.



England bowler Shoaib Bashir is congratulated by Jack Leach during England practice ahead of the second test match

VISAKHAPATNAM (Agencies): Off-spinner Shoaib Bashir will make his England debut in the second Test against India in Visakhapatnam.

The 20-year-old replaces the injured Jack Leach, while James Anderson comes in for Mark Wood.

Bashir first came to the attention of England captain Ben Stokes when a video of him bowling for Somerset was posted on Twitter, now X.

"I'm fully backing him and looking forward to him hopefully putting on a show," said Stokes.

Though Bashir has played only six first-class matches, England believe his height and the amount he tries to spin the ball can make him an asset in India.

Bashir's selection for this tour was similarly left-field to that of Lancashire left-arm spinner Tom Hartley, who picked up 7-62 in the second innings of England's stun-

ning 28-run win in the first Test in Hyderabad.

Speaking to BBC Sport, Stokes said: "He possesses that natural ability, where he releases the ball from and how much energy he tries to put on the ball.

"Someone releasing the ball from height and putting that much on the ball is going to get that natural variation. That is very hard to play against out here. Some balls will spin, some will skid on."

England: Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Ollie Pope, Joe Root, Jonny Bairstow, Ben Stokes, Ben Foakes, Rehan Ahmed, Tom Hartley, Shoaib Bashir, James Anderson.

Leach suffered a knee injury during the first Test and Stokes was unable to say how long the 32-year-old will be out for.

With Bashir coming in, England are once again fielding three front-

line spinners. Between them, Bashir, Hartley and Rehan Ahmed have only three Test caps.

In contrast, Anderson will collect his 184th cap and, at 41 years and 187 days on Friday's opening day, will become the oldest seamer ever to bowl in a Test in India.

It will make 2024 the 22nd consecutive year in which Anderson, England's all-time leading wicket-taker, has played at least one Test.

"It's great to bring in someone like Jimmy, who has an unbelievable amount of experience," said Stokes. "What maybe goes under the radar is his record out in India."

Stokes, vice-captain Ollie Pope and coach Brendon McCullum took a long look at the Visakhapatnam pitch before naming the England XI on Thursday.

It is not expected to turn as much as the surface in Hyderabad, but Stokes said it is drying out.

"The pitch looks drier than it did yesterday," he said. "It's about backing your decisions when you pick a team."

"We just feel the way we were able to operate with our spinners was a massive boost for us."

India will make at least two changes to their side, having lost all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja and batter KL Rahul to injuries since the first Test. They were already without star batter Virat Kohli, pace bowler Mohammed Shami and wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant.

The defeat in the first Test was only India's fourth in 47 home matches. They have not lost the first two Tests in a home series since 2000.

However, despite seemingly carrying momentum from Hyderabad, England have memories of their last tour in 2021, when they won the first Test but then lost the last three.



In brief

CDA seals 51 buildings

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Capital Development Authority (CDA) on Thursday sealed 51 buildings in Jinnah Garden, Phase One, for non-conforming use and issued notices to the owners to eliminate illegal constructions and illegal use of buildings. The Building Control Section along with Enforcement Directorate conducted the operation with the assistance of Islamabad District Administration and Police. On the directives of the CDA chairman, the Authority had been engaged in conducting operations against encroachments, illegal constructions and violation of building bylaws in the Federal Capital for last many months.

Police arrest two bike lifters

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested two bike lifters and recovered five stolen motorcycles from their possession, said a Police spokesman here on Thursday. He informed that a team under the supervision of SHO, New Town Police Station managed to net two bike lifters namely Saghir and Abdul Wahid and recovered five stolen motorcycles and other items from their possession. A case has been registered against the accused while further investigation is underway. Superintendent of Police, Rawal Faisal Saleem said the accomplices and facilitators of the accused would also be sent behind bars.

Police carry out search operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police here on Thursday carried out search operations in Morgah, Peoples Colony, Kohsar Colony and adjoining areas in the jurisdiction of Morgah, Race Course and Taxila police stations to net the criminals. According to a police spokesman, the search operations were conducted to maintain law and order and flush out suspects following the directions of City Police Officer (CPO) Syed Khalid Hamdani. He informed senior police officers and police personnel including women police to take part in the search operation. Police checked as many as 58 houses, 26 shops, and 200 individuals during the search operations. The spokesman said that police were fully prepared to shield the lives and property of the public and combating and search operations were being done to flush out the suspects and hardcore criminals. He said that police were more vigilant to keep an eye on suspects and maintain law and order in Rawalpindi.

M Ashraf remembered

ISLAMABAD (APP): Renowned music Director M Ashraf was remembered on the occasion of his birth anniversary on Thursday. Born on February 1, 1942, he got music lessons from his maternal grandfather who also happened to be uncle of veteran Pakistani music director Master Inayat Hussain. He started his film career by directing the famous song "Tu jo nahin hay tau kuchh bhi nahin hay" which was sung by playback singer SB John. He produced music for a number of hit songs of 60s and 70s which won appreciation in the whole subcontinent. M Ashraf collaborated with his mate Manzoor Ashraf till 1967, but from Sajda he started solo work. Famous singers like Ahmed Rushdi, Shokat Ali, Masood Rana, Alamgir, Muhammad Ali Shehki, Naheed Akhtar and Nayyara Noor, the legendary singers were introduced by him in the music industry. He continued his successful march in the 1980s despite the downfall of Urdu films and a dominance of Punjabi films.



ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister for Human Rights and Women Empowerment Mushaal Hussein Mullick addressing a seminar organized by The India Study Center in Institute of Strategic Studies.

Education Minister call for enhancing Pak-Qatar bilateral ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Madad Ali Sindhi Thursday said that Pakistan and Qatar should enhance their bilateral ties especially in exchange of technology, education and research. The minister was speaking during a meeting with the Ambassador-designate of Qatar to Pakistan, Ali Mubarak A.E. Al-Khater and other officials of the Embassy. Madad Ali welcomed the Qatar delegation and said that the two countries had cultural, linguistic and people-to-people love for each other.

He discussed with the delegation exchange of expertise and knowledge regarding vocational and technical training.

The minister said that the two countries could benefit from the experience of each other.

He praised the long standing cordial relations between the two countries.

Madad Ali welcomed exchange of teachers and students to further mutual cooperation. He said that there was significant potential in cooperation between the two countries.

He said that teachers training and quality of education had been given the highest priority since he took charge of his office.

He said that digitalisation of the education sector could address numerous challenges of today and tomorrow. He highlighted the E-Taleem and Teleschool platforms developed by the Ministry of

Education in its bid to develop digital solutions to prevalent problems in the public education sector. Madad Ali said that Pakistan had always collaborated with Muslim countries and looks forward to enhancing bilateral and multilateral cooperation with Qatar.

He appreciated the developments in the education sector of Qatar and said that through exchange of expertise Pakistan could learn from their experiences. Madad Ali acknowledged the booming construction and hospitality sector of Qatar and expressed his desire to enhance collaboration in the fields. The Qatari ambassador said that the people of his country had deep affiliation with Pakistan.

Seven Pakistani firms to participate in US power sports trade show

ISLAMABAD (APP): Seven Pakistani companies are set to make a maiden appearance in AIM Expo-North America's biggest power sports trade show being held from February 6-8. To be held at the Las Vegas Convention Center, the Expo would also mark the presence of Pakistani firms at the Pakistan Pavilion to be established with the collaboration of Trade Development Authority of

Pakistan (TDAP) and the Consulate General of Pakistan in Los Angeles. AIMExpo is the single most important event for the North American power sports industry that brings together industry, media and dealers in a single arena to provide them a comprehensive B2B platform. It connects businesses to accelerate opportunities among exhibiting brands, distributors, manufacturers and dealers.

Separately, Ambassador of Pakistan in Vietnam Samina Mehtab hosted a dinner for Vietnamese businesspersons to explore the potential of increasing the export of agricultural products from Pakistan to Vietnam.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's Ambassador in Bahrain Saqib Rauf called on President of RCSI Bahrain Sameer Ootom to discuss potential avenues of cooperation.

Excise to facilitate citizens for vehicle registration, transfer, token tax at Trail-3

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a move to streamline essential civic services and bring them closer to the community, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon on Thursday initiated an exclusive drive to facilitate citizens at Trail-3 parking lot from 3 to 5 pm. The excise staff will be on-site, offering a hassle-free experience for vehicle owners seeking registration, transfers, and token tax processing, ICT spokesman Dr Abdullah Tabasum said.

He said that, this

unprecedented initiative not only caters to vehicular paperwork but also introduces the ICT Doorstep Service. The citizens are encouraged to avail the opportunity to obtaining your Domicile Certificate, Birth Certificate, Power of Attorney, International Driving Permit, Fuel Permit (Domestic/Commercial), or Motor Vehicle Registration, all at one convenient location, he added.

He further emphasized that the Facilitation Center's Doorstep ICT

Vehicle will be present, providing a seamless and efficient solution for various administrative needs. He said that whether you're a vehicle owner looking to sort out your paperwork or in need of essential documents, this event promises efficiency with a touch of convenience to the masses.

The citizens are urged not to miss this opportunity to simplify bureaucratic processes and get everything done at the Rose and Jasmine Garden parking lot today.

‘Cultural heritage sites’ protection crucial for nation’s economic growth: minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Syed Jamal Shah Thursday said that it was important to preserve the cultural heritage sites of the country and promote artistic growth among the youth.

Talking to a Private news channel, minister said that caretaker government was actively working to promote calligraphy in madaris as the visual art was part of Muslim heritage, adding, Calligraphy needs to be promoted to advocate peace, love and harmony in present society.

He mentioned that caretaker government has worked to establish a heritage channel under the Culture Division to preserve and promote the collection of folk

literature of Pakistani languages, especially children's folk literature.

He said the scope of culture is unlimited, adding, every nation who is staying connected with their culture are the ones that develop the most. Replying to a question, he said caretaker government had taken revolutionary steps for promotion of art and culture with introducing various project including heritage channel, children contents on youth, cinema promotion and youth related programs. To another question related to forthcoming elections, he assured for a peaceful and timely conduct of elections in country, adding, public need to choose representatives on merit instead of focusing on political affiliations.

NDMA, KUM inks LoA collaboration

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) think tank National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) and Kohsar University Murree (KUM) have formalized a transformative cooperation through the signing of a Letter of Agreement (LoA) on Thursday in the field of disaster management.

Chief Coordinator NIDM, Tanveer Piracha, and Vice Chancellor KUM, Prof Dr Habib Ali Bokhari officiated the signing ceremony of LoA at NDMA (HQs), a news release said.

The agreement underscores a commitment to a collaborative partnership between the two entities for building institutional capacities and advancing knowledge, expertise, and innovation in the field of disaster management and related areas.

The collaboration between NIDM and KUM is assured to contribute significantly to the development of innovative solutions in disaster risk reduction and knowledge exchange in disaster management, reinforcing their shared dedication to creating a safer and more resilient future. The meeting concluded with a detailed tour of the NEOC hall at NDMA, showcasing the preparedness and capabilities of the center.

Kashmiri artists & poets playing significant role in highlighting Indian HR abuses: Mushaal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Human Rights and Women Empowerment Mushaal Hussein Mullick on Thursday said the Kashmiri artists and musicians were playing a significant role in highlighting Indian human rights violations and expressing the resistance and struggle for freedom of the people of Jammu and Kashmir through their works. She was addressing a seminar on "Reflections of Resilience: Showcasing Kashmiri Identity & Solidarity through Art", organized by The India Study Center (ISC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad.

The event brought together young Pakistani and Kashmiri artists, creating a platform for an artistic exploration of Kashmiri identity and resilience and expressing solidarity with the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK). Mushaal lauded the creative initiative of engaging and empowering the youth of both Pakistan and Kashmir to express support for the Kashmiri freedom struggle through art. She said the musicians from Kashmir had composed songs that reflected the sentiments of resistance in the people of IIOJK which resonated locally and globally.

She said that visual artists, filmmakers, and photographers from the region were recognized for their contributions in depicting the harsh realities of life in Kashmir through political cartoons, illustrations, documentaries, and powerful images. She also acknowledged the literary contribution of Kashmiri poets and writers for providing a voice to the Kashmiri people through verses, novels, short stories, and essays.

The SAPM underscored the vital role of the Kashmiri artists and activists in utilizing social media platforms to share their

work and raise awareness about human rights violations by India and the ongoing struggle for freedom by the people of IIOJK. Mushaal underlined the impactful role of cultural events, concerts, and art festivals in engaging diverse audiences, expressing solidarity with people of IIOJK and constructing a compelling narrative to deepen global understanding of the Kashmir struggle. She stressed the significance of Pakistan's educational institutions and universities organizing cultural festivals, with a specific focus on inviting Kashmiri talent to showcase their skills on international platforms.

She highlighted that organizing art exhibitions featuring the works of talented Kashmiri artists had the potential to resonate beyond national borders. Mushaal advocated for cultural diplomacy as a means to support and promote initiatives that amplify Kashmiri voices. She stressed close collaboration between the artists from Kashmir and Pakistan for participation in global cultural events to garner international recognition.

She underscored films as a powerful tool for raising global awareness, urging Pakistan's media houses to create documentary films that explore the lives and struggles of the people, artists, musicians, and poets of Kashmir. The SAPM said that by highlighting the Kashmiri freedom struggle through their works, artists could contribute to a broader understanding of the complexities involved in the Kashmiri freedom struggle and advocate for justice and peace. Mushaal later inaugurated the Kashmir Art Exhibition, witnessed the artwork depicting the lives of Kashmiri people under the Indian oppression and distributed awards among the winners of the Kashmir art competition.

Provision of necessary facilities to public basic responsibility of govt agencies. Wafaqi Mohtasib

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Wafaqi Mohtasib, expressing satisfaction on FGEHA's report about implementation of its recommendations, on Wednesday said that the provision of necessary facilities to the general public was one of the basic responsibilities of all government agencies.

The Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA), in its report submitted to the Wafaqi Mohtasib Secretariat, stated that it

had implemented all the recommendations made by the Wafaqi Mohtasib's Inspection Team, following its visit to the organization in response to the public complaints.

The Wafaqi Mohtasib's Inspection Team had directed the FGEHA to place the seniority list of the allottees on its website, to be duly updated after every 30 days along with preparing the billboards and placing instructions for the visitors at the key places in English as well

as in Urdu.

It also instructed that the applicants may be apprised of the objections/ deficiencies with regard to their requests for transfer of plots and houses within three days in addition to provision of two additional printers for facilitating the public/visitors.

The Team also directed the Authority to make necessary arrangements for protecting the record room from accidental outbreak of fire by installing necessary firefighting equipment.

DC Murree visits different areas to review arrangements to facilitate tourists

RAWALPINDI (APP): Deputy Commissioner (DC) Murree, Agha Zaheer Abbas Shirazi on Wednesday night visited Express Highway and other areas to review arrangements made to facilitate tourists and the ongoing operation to remove snow and clear roads.

The DC informed that the Municipal Corporation 'Nari' had cleared all the roads and kept the traffic flowing despite the difficult weather conditions.

Traffic was slow due to traffic rush and slippery roads within the limits of Municipal Corporation Murree, the DC said. The officers and other personnel of different departments were present in the field, he informed.

The DC Murree directed National Highway Authority (NHA) officials to provide immediate assistance to the administration and advised the tourists to get information about weather conditions before visiting Murree. He asked the visitors to follow the advisory issued by the tourist

district administration.

Monitoring of various roads was being conducted from the control room through CCTV cameras, he informed. According to MET Office, Murree received 8.5 inch snow till midnight on Wednesday.

According to Murree district administration spokesman, Additional Deputy Commissioner Revenue, Murree Capt. (Rtd) Qasim Ijaz was monitoring the traffic flow and operation to remove snow from different roads.

The administration was taking all possible measures in collaboration with the traffic police to ensure flow of traffic, he said.

He informed that a large number of tourists were coming to Murree to enjoy the snowfall and the administration was making all-out efforts to provide all possible facilities to them.

The spokesman said that Relief Commissioner Punjab Nabeel Javed had directed the Murree administration to remain alert particularly during snowfall.

ing snowfall.

The Relief Commissioner had also warned that no compromise would be on negligence on part of the officials concerned. Snow should also be removed within shortest possible time frame while using heavy machinery, the Relief Commissioner ordered. The flow of traffic on the roads should be ensured at all cost, Nabeel Javed said.

It is the responsibility of the administration to provide all possible facilities to the tourists according to the weather condition, he said. The tourists had also been requested to check the weather conditions before coming to Murree. Snowfall in 'Queen of Hills', Murree attracts a large number of tourists and the administration was striving to facilitate them and avoid any untoward incident, Nabeel Javed added. ADCR, Qasim Ijaz while appreciating efforts the departments concerned said that all the personnel concerned were in the field despite extreme cold and snow.



RAWALPINDI: A view of banners of candidates on the street lights at 6th Road in connection with upcoming General Elections-2024.

Chinese invest in Afghanistan

KABUL (BNA): The Shandong Chendga Group, a conglomerate of Chinese companies, has expressed readiness to invest in various sectors in Afghanistan, including energy and cement production. Nooruddin Azizi, the Acting Minister of Industry and Commerce, recently met with Robert Meng, a representative of the group. Meng outlined the group's interest in launching projects in Afghanistan, such as solar power production with a minimum capacity of 10 megawatts in Kabul.

Electricity from water, wind

KABUL (TOLonews): The Silk Road Company said it will invest in electricity production from water and wind resources in Afghanistan, according to the spokesman of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Akhundzada Abdul Salam Jawad, who said that in a meeting the acting minister of the MOIC with the officials of the Silk Road Company stressed increased support and more investment of this company.

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

Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan denies UN report on Al-Qaeda presence



KABUL (BNA) In a statement, Mawlawi Zabihullah Mujahid, the spokesman of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, vehemently denied the findings of a

United Nations Security Council report regarding the existence of Al-Qaeda centers in Afghanistan. He also dismissed allegations of any involvement

by certain groups within the country. Addressing the media, Mr. Mujahid criticized member countries of the Security Council, accusing them of initiating

a regular program aimed at accusing the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. He asserted that these accusations stem from the frustration of those member countries who have faced failures in Afghanistan. Appealing to other member countries of the Security Council, particularly those with diplomatic ties to Afghanistan, Mr. Mujahid urged them to prevent the situation within the international organization from deteriorating. He cautioned against allowing the Security Council's decisions to become entangled in the political aspirations of a few countries. Reiterating the Islamic Emirate's commitment to peace and stability, Mr. Mujahid assured the international community that Afghanistan's territory would not be utilized as a base for any hostile activities against any nation.

Efforts ongoing to strengthen country's borders: Mujahid

KABUL (BNA): Mawlawi Mohammad Yaqoob Mujahid, the Acting Minister of National Defense, has expressed determination to strengthen the country's borders during a meeting with Abdul Salam Azizov, the head of intelligence and border guards of Uzbekistan. The discussion covered border issues, strengthening bilateral relations, economic and transit cooperation, and other topics. Mujahid emphasized the enhancement of relations between the two neighboring and Muslim countries, stating that significant progress has been made on the country's borders over the past year, and more actions are planned for the future. He also assured his



Uzbekistani counterparts that the defense and security forces of the Islamic Emirate are ready to collaborate on developmental

projects and regional initiatives. Uzbekistan reciprocated by emphasizing the strengthening of relations

with the Islamic Emirate and assuring continued cooperation in various sectors for the people of Afghanistan.

Islamic Emirate pledges balanced development across the country

KABUL (BNA): Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, the Deputy Prime Minister for Political Affairs, has stated that the Islamic Emirate is committed to balanced development across the country, with no distinction between deprived and non-deprived districts or regions. During a meeting with scholars and elders from the Naki district in Paktika province, they assured their collaboration with the Islamic Emirate and expressed their responsibilities towards supporting the Islamic system and fulfilling Afghan aspirations. They also requested support for land distribution, establishment of health centers, creation of schools, and construction of roads in their district, highlighting the neglect



they experienced under past governments. Mawlawi Abdul Kabir

emphasized that the Islamic system does not discriminate based on

region, language, or ethnicity, and that special attention is given to remote areas.

Chinese President Receives Credentials from Bilal Karimi, the New Afghan Ambassador

KABUL (BNA): In a special ceremony held on Tuesday, Xi Jinping, the President of the People's Republic of China, formally accepted the credentials of Mawlawi Assadullah Bilal Karimi, as the Ambassador and Extraordinary Representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Abdul Qahar Balkhi, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, reported that Karimi also had a meeting with the Chinese Foreign Minister, who congratulated him on his new role. Karimi began his tenure as the ambassador at the Afghan Embassy in China this year, following the sub-



mission of his credentials to the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Afghan women demand active role at Doha Conference

Hakim Bigzaad

As the Doha Conference on Afghanistan approaches, prominent members of women's protest movements have sent an open letter to the United Nations, advocating for the active participation of women in the conference. The open letter, carrying the signatures of approximately 10 protest movements, was released on Wednesday, February 1st, following a virtual meeting among women's rights activists. It emphasizes that any decision regarding

Afghanistan's fate without consulting women will not be acceptable. The letter states that the meaningful presence of women is crucial, given the ongoing violations of women's rights in Afghanistan, including arbitrary detentions of girls, gender-based violence, and acts of gender apartheid. It should be noted that the Doha Conference is scheduled to be held on February 18 and 19, initiated by the United Nations. This is the second Doha Conference focused on Afghanistan, with the first one hosted by the

United Nations approximately eight months ago. During the initial Doha Conference, Afghan women were not represented. It is reported that officials from the Taliban government have also been invited to attend this conference. However, women's rights activists argue that women protesters have been fighting against the Taliban's harsh actions against women for the past two and a half years and should be included in the conference. Mina Rafiq, one of the women's rights activists, adds, "In previous confer-

ences, genuine women representatives were absent, and it was ineffective. In the Doha conference, women who are actively opposing and fighting against the policies of the Taliban should be invited." The main agenda of this conference is to discuss and negotiate the proposals put forth by Feridun Sinirioğlu, a former Turkish diplomat. Additionally, sources say that discussions will take place during this conference regarding the appointment of a new UN envoy for Afghanistan. Khaama Press

From film directing dream to tailoring journey amid restrictions in Afghanistan



Zahra Rashidi

Sarah is the name of a young girl who lives in one of the impoverished neighborhoods of Kabul. She graduated in economics and had been nurturing her dream of becoming a film director before the return of the Taliban. However, the constraints and limitations of the Taliban regime have confined her to the four walls. If there's electricity, she sews clothes from early morning till evening, supporting her family with the earnings. Sarah says her father retired two years ago, and there is no one else to financially support their family. Every day, she starts her work behind the sewing machine, with the awareness that if the Taliban had not come, she would have been somewhere else, and her life would not have been reduced to finding bread out of necessity. She has dedicated a small room in their house to sewing, and Sarah is always either waiting for customers, although orders are scarce at this time of the year, or sitting behind the sewing

machine, praying for the electricity to come because she does her work with an electric sewing machine. At the age of 24, she has come to accept the reality that the realization of her dreams (continuing education, studying, and directing) is not possible anytime soon. By accepting this reality, she has taken on the responsibility of her six-member family and strives in this regard. According to Sarah, for now, "the only hope I have is my sewing machine because that's the only way I work and use the money I earn for my family. But if there's no electricity - which is usually the case - I am even deprived of this modest dream." Sarah says that due to frequent power outages, 80% of her work is delayed. If there's electricity, she can sew five different types of clothes daily, but without electricity, she can only sew two types, and that too during the night. She describes the challenges of sewing at night, saying, "Sewing at night is difficult because on one hand, I feel sleepy, and on the other hand, working with a sewing machine can

be risky with even the slightest carelessness. The customer's clothes could get damaged, or I could accidentally hurt my finger with the needle." The clothes Sarah sews are diverse, and she has regular customers. She charges between 300 to 2000 Afghanis for sewing each piece, depending on the design and fabric. Sarah is especially known for her Punjabi-style clothing, for which she charges 300 Afghanis per piece. She inherited the skill of sewing from her mother, and the sewing machine she uses to support her family is a gift from her sister. Sarah recalls, "My first job was making a six-piece dress. My sister wasn't feeling well and asked me to sew a customer's six-piece dress." Now that Sarah works from home and has designated a room for herself, her father doesn't allow her to work outside the home or have a shop. However, she acknowledges that having a shop could attract more customers and bring greater benefits. Most of her customers are relatives and friends, as she doesn't have much visibility in the area due to

working from home. Sarah completed her education in economics at Kabul University and says, "I don't know how realistic my dreams were, but I wanted to become a film director." However, for now, she doesn't think about pursuing a career in directing or continuing her education. Her happiness lies in the fact that as the New Year approaches, she anticipates an increase in orders, and her income from these orders will also rise. She explains, "I can't celebrate occasions like Eid, New Year, and similar festivities because I often work more on those nights than on regular days." She currently works alone, with her younger sister rarely accompanying her. Sarah is on the lookout for ways to expand her business and teach apprentices. In Afghanistan, Sarah is not alone; thousands of other girls have buried their dreams due to significant limitations on women. Some are forced into activities contrary to their desires, while others, like Sarah, find solace in the hum of the sewing machine during dark days. Khaama Press



No bargain on rights of people, says Bilawal

F.P. Report

KHUZZAR: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has said that only his party can face the external challenges along with solving the internal problems of the country. He pointed out that President Asif Ali Zardari had pioneered the development of Balochistan province in the form of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), but Nawaz Sharif changed the direction of the Corridor as soon as he became the Prime Minister for the third time and prevented the country's most backward province from moving towards a new destination of prosperity.

According to the press release issued by Media Cell Bilawal House, the PPP chairman, while addressing a mammoth public meeting here on Thursday in connection with the election campaign, said that those forces are targeting his party, who do not want it to form the government in Balochistan and the federation, because they know that if Bilawal Bhutto Zardari becomes the Prime Minister and a Jiyala becomes a Chief Minister in Balochistan, all their conspiracies will fail. "They know that Baloch blood runs in my veins, they know that the way I feel the pain of Balochistan, no other politician does. They know that I am the son of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto and I understand the pain of the martyrs of Balochistan, and I am aware of the problems of Balochistan. They know that I will not only fight the terrorists, but at the same time solve the problem of missing persons," he added.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that his party does politics without discrimination, and it is neither afraid of anyone nor bows down to anyone. "We stand on our feet and fight every force, and do not bargain on the rights of the people," he added. He pointed out that if the 18th Amendment, NFC Award and The Aghaz-e-Huaqooq-e-Balochistan Programme, initiated by the President Asif Ali Zardari, had been fully implemented, all conspiracies being hatched in and around Balochistan would have ended. He said that the real problems of the people of Balochistan are unemployment, poverty and inflation.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said the PPP was the only party which would not only fight the real problems of the people but also win over them, adding that is why once again PPP is the target of terrorists. "There have been frequent attacks on PPP ticket holders in the last few days," he said, adding that one attack was carried out in Mastung, two in Turbat, one on Asghar Rind and the other on Zahoor Buledi, while in addition attacks were made in Bolan. "Our party's former provincial president Ali Madad Jatak was attacked in Quetta, and Agha Shakil Durrani was attacked in Khuzdar. They (terrorists) thought that I and the PPP would be scared, but this is their mistake," he said.

Govt fully prepared to hold elections on Feb 8: Solangi

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Thursday said that the caretaker government was fully prepared and committed to conduct general elections on February 8.

He was addressing a seminar on "Challenges and Roadmap for the New Government", organized by the Press Information Department. The minister said that as the government's spokesperson, he had been reiterating the caretaker government's commitment for holding elections as per the schedule given by the Election Commission of Pakistan.

"The election process should continue in any case and major issues facing the country, including economy, foreign policy, local governments, governance and civil service reforms, should also be discussed to find their solution," he remarked. Solangi said that despite many flaws in the democratic system and electoral process, everyone was in agreement that the electoral process should not be stopped and elections should be held.

He said that since the formation of the caretaker

cabinet on August 17, 2023, the government had been consistently reiterating its commitment that the elections would definitely be held and also on the scheduled date of February 8. The minister said that speakers in the seminar had highlighted the historical background of elections in Pakistan thoroughly. Such speeches should end the impression of restriction on the freedom of expression. He said that some elements had been spreading rumours about delaying the elections on the pretext of security and weather issues.

He recalled that there were security issues in 2008 and 2013 but the elections were held. Likewise, the 1970 elections, the first elections under the adult franchise system, were held in harsh weather in December. Today the security and weather problems were real, but elections in the past were held despite such issues, he added.

He reiterated that the 2008 and 2013 elections had security issues, while the first adult franchise polls were held on December 7, 1970 in bitterly cold weather. The minister said that the country was facing multiple challenges and problems today.

He said that there was urgent need for tax reforms

to stabilize the economy. Apart from that, the system of local governments was mandatory under the Constitution, but unfortunately it had been fully paralyzed. He said that after the 18th Constitutional Amendment, the resources were transferred to the provinces, which unfortunately could not be further transferred to the lower level. Solangi said that there had been problems of a level playing field. The poor and middle classes never got a level playing field.

Certain political parties were crying about the level playing field but they should first bring democracy in their ranks. "Real democracy will flourish when the persons from middle, lower middle and working classes can contest elections and get elected." He reaffirmed that economy, foreign policy, local governments, governance and civil service reforms were the real and fundamental problems of the country. "We should discuss these issues and there should be a national consensus on how to cope with the challenges after the election," he maintained. He said that there should not be politics on the country's future.

During the meeting, he said that Asif Ali Zardari and Sahibzada Abul Khair Dr Mohammad Zubair have agreed on a formal electoral alliance and an eight-point agreement. Syed Sibtain Gillani said that in the light of the same 8-points agreement, he in the capacity of the central vice president of JUP-Noorani Group urging the party workers and supporters to cast their votes in favour of PPP candidates across the country to bring political, social and economic stability in the country.

JUP-Noorani announces electoral alliance with PPP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP) Noorani Group has announced electoral alliance with Pakistan People's Party (PPP) for the General Elections 2024. This was announced by the central vice president JUP-Noorani Group, Syed Mohammad Sibtain Gillani, alias Taj Agha and Divisional President PPP, Peshawar, Haji Misbahuddin during a press conference here on Thursday.

Others JUP and PPP lead-

ers including Mohammad Owais Qadri advocate, Mohammad Iqbal, Shah Zuqarnain and other leaders of PPP. Talking on the occasion, Syed Sibtain Gillani, alias Taj Agha said that JUP-Noorani Group and PPP have entered into electoral alliance for the general elections. The alliance, he said was reached out between both parties during a meeting of the former president Asif Zardari and President JUP-Noorani Group, Sahibzada Abul Khair Dr Mohammad Zubair, at Lahore.

During the meeting, he said that Asif Ali Zardari and Sahibzada Abul Khair Dr Mohammad Zubair have agreed on a formal electoral alliance and an eight-point agreement. Syed Sibtain Gillani said that in the light of the same 8-points agreement, he in the capacity of the central vice president of JUP-Noorani Group urging the party workers and supporters to cast their votes in favour of PPP candidates across the country to bring political, social and economic stability in the country.

Special court issues written judgment in cipher case

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The special court on Thursday issued the detailed written judgment regarding the 10-year imprisonment sentence to former PTI chairman and Shah Mehmood Qureshi in the cipher case. The judgment containing 77 pages was authored by Special Court Judge Abul Hasnat Muhammad Zulqarnain.

The written verdict said that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf founder and Shah Mehmood Qureshi requested for a fair trial through improper procedure. "The behaviour of both the accused was taken into consideration during the trial both," he said adding that the accused created self-inflicted miseries and tried to pretend as helpless to sympathy.

The decision said that as per the findings, "the acts of omission and commission of the accused persons has had serious adverse affect on Pakistan's diplomatic and political standing among comity of nations. This, in turn, has benefited foreign powers hostile to Pakistan". It said that, "Statement of Azam Khan is very much pivotal with regard to the charge showing that cypher telegram which was accountable document was retained by accused Imran Ahmad Khan Niazi and same was not returned to MOFA and no rebuttal came from defence side in this regard. Thus, charge stands proved.

"The cypher being an official secret document and classified as such was still in the possession of accused Imran Ahmad Khan Niazi and that the unauthorized retention and misuse of the cypher had compromised the entire cypher security system of the state and secret communication methods used by Pakistan's missions abroad." The said an FIR was registered after an inquiry in the matter was concluded on 05.10.2022, later on both the accused were formally arrested and sent to judicial lock up in instant case.

It said that being the prime minister it was the responsibility of former PTI chairman to return the secret document as the Foreign Office could not demand it from the prime minister. The cypher was yet to be returned by the founder PTI chairman. The case was related to cipher which was received from Washington, it added.

The order further said that the court had testified 25 witnesses during the trial. "It is observed with pain that attitudes of defence lawyers were not serious throughout the proceedings. On 27.01.2024 defence counsel were not available but defense counsel at state expense were present.

US, Japan conduct joint drills

TAIWAN: A powerful display of military cooperation unfolded in the Philippine Sea this week as a dozen United States and Japanese warships, including two US aircraft carriers, engaged in joint exercises near Taiwan. This demonstration of strength underscores the commitment to regional security amid heightened tensions with China and ongoing challenges in the Middle East.

The participation of the USS Carl Vinson and USS Theodore Roosevelt, alongside the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force's JS Ise and other vessels, showcased the ability of the US Navy and its allies to swiftly assemble formidable naval forces in the Indo-Pacific region.

Throughout the exercises, which included defense drills and tactical maneuvers, the US and Japan demonstrated their readiness to respond to contingencies across a vast expanse of Asian waters. Analysts highlight the strategic importance of these exercises, particularly amidst concerns that Middle East conflicts could divert attention away from the Western Pacific.

The timing of the joint maneuvers sends a clear message of continued US commitment to the region, despite challenges elsewhere. With tensions escalating in areas like the South China Sea, the exercises serve as a reminder of the carrier strike group's ability to address a range of contingencies across the region.

— Realtime Global Data Intelligence Platform



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador-designate of Russia to Pakistan, Mr. Albert P. Khorev, presenting his diplomatic credentials to President Dr. Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Centuries-old mosque torn down in Indian capital

NEW DELHI (AFP): Bulldozers have knocked down a centuries-old mosque in India's capital, a member of the building's managing committee said Thursday, during a demolition drive to remove "illegal" structures from a forest reserve.

The demolition comes at a sensitive time in India with nationalist activists emboldened in their long campaign for the replacement of several prominent mosques with Hindu temples. The Masjid Akhonji in New Delhi, which its caretakers say is around 600 years old, was home to 22 students enrolled in an Islamic boarding school.

It was torn down on Tuesday in a forest of Mehrauli, an affluent neighbourhood dotted with centuries-old ruins from settlements predating modern Delhi. Mohammad Zaffar, a member of the mosque's managing committee, told AFP that it had not received any prior notice before a demolition carried out "in the dark of the night". He said many graves in the mosque compound were also desecrated, and no one was allowed to take out copies of Quran or other materials from inside the mosque before it was razed.

"Many of our revered figures and my own ancestors were buried there. There is no trace of the graves now," Zaffar told AFP. "The rubble from the mosque and the graves has been removed and dumped somewhere else." The Delhi Development Authority, the city's main land man-

agement agency responsible for carrying out the demolitions, did not respond to AFP's requests for comment.

A heavy police presence had barricaded roads outside the grounds on Thursday and refused access to the site. The demolition took place barely a week after Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated a grand new Hindu temple in the northern city of Ayodhya, built on grounds once home to the centuries-old Babri mosque. That mosque was torn down in 1992 in a campaign spearheaded by members of Modi's party, sparking sectarian riots that killed 2,000 people nationwide, most of them Muslims.

Hindu activist groups have also laid claim to the disputed Gyanvapi mosque in the Indian holy city of Varanasi, which they say was built over a Hindu temple during the Muslim Mughal empire centuries ago. Hindu worshippers entered the Gyanvapi mosque on Thursday to pray after a local court gave them permission to do so. Calls for India to enshrine Hindu supremacy have rapidly grown louder since Modi took office in 2014, making the country's roughly 210-million-strong Muslim minority increasingly anxious about their future.

Hindu worshippers on Thursday began praying inside a disputed mosque in the Indian city of Varanasi just hours after a court order gave them the go-ahead at the deeply sen-

sitive site, media reported. The Gyanvapi mosque in the holy city of Varanasi is one of several Islamic houses of worship that Hindu activists, backed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's party, have sought for decades to reclaim.

A Varanasi court ruled Wednesday that Hindu worshippers could pray in the building's basement, and ordered authorities to "make proper arrangements" for worshippers within a week. Broadcaster NDTV reported that family members of Hindu priests started praying in the mosque's basement in the early hours of Thursday morning.

The Gyanvapi mosque was built in the 17th century during the Muslim Mughal empire in a city where Hindus from across the country cremate relatives by the Ganges river. Hindu worshippers believe the mosque replaced a temple to the Hindu deity Shiva. Last month, India's official archaeological agency said a survey of the site appeared to corroborate the belief that it was originally home to a temple, according to local news reports.

Emboldened right-wing Hindu groups have laid claim to several Muslim sites of worship they say were built atop ancient temples during Mughal rule. Last week, Modi presided over a grand inauguration ceremony in the nearby city of Ayodhya for a Hindu temple built on grounds once home to the centuries-old Babri mosque.

KPITB, AKF sign MoU

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: As an important step towards skills development and employment of youth of the province, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Technology Board (KPITB) and Al-Khidmat Foundation Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (AKF KP Region) to leverage the strengths and resources of both the parties in order to promote and develop digital skills initiatives in the province.

An MoU signing ceremony to this effect, was held here at Chief Minister's House Peshawar on Thursday with caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah as chief guest. Provincial Caretaker Minister for ST&IT Dr. Najeeb Ullah, Vice Chancellor IM Sciences Dr Usman Ghani, Managing Director KPITB Dr. Ali Mehmood, concerned authorities of Al-khidmat Foundation and other relevant high ups attended the ceremony.

The Memorandum of Understanding has formally been established to foster a collaborative partnership between KPITB and AKF KP Region, focusing on the empowerment and development of digital skills in the province, through which, 0.3 million youth from across the province would be imparted with mid and advanced levels digital skills courses under "Bano Qabil" program of Al-khidmat Foundation. The proposed courses for this purpose include; Office Automation, Art of Crafting, Graphic Designing, Motion Graphic, Amazon, E-commerce Evolution, Sales and Lead Generation, Digital Marketing and Freelancing, Mobile App Development, Web Development, Artificial Intelligence, Cyber Security Fundamentals and Data Sciences.

Addressing the ceremony, Caretaker Chief Minister said that youth of this province is highly talented; we need just to take practical steps in order to effectively utilize their untapped potentials adding that the caretaker provincial government has chalked out Human Capital Export Strategy, under which youth of the province would be equipped with market-based digital skills through collaborative partnership with the relevant departments and institutions.

"The Memorandum of Understanding between KPITB and AKF is also a part of those efforts", he remarked and added that significant increase in the trained and skilled manpower is the need of hour; it can play an effective role in steering the country out of current financial crunches. He made it clear that, Human Resource Export Strategy has been devised with the target to train up to five lac youth during the next one year, and they would be sent abroad for employment. The chief minister also urged upon private sector institutions and authorities to extend their support to the provincial government for this national cause adding that the role of Al-Khidmat Foundation in this regard is commendable.

He hoped that the Memorandum of Understanding between Al-Khidmat Foundation and KPITB would significantly help to meet the requirements of digital skills in the province. The chief minister has underlined the need to initiate implementation of this MoU without any delay, and directed the authorities concerned to take necessary steps for this purpose.

"The Memorandum of Understanding between KPITB and AKF is also a part of those efforts", he remarked and added that significant increase in the trained and skilled manpower is the need of hour; it can play an effective role in steering the country out of current financial crunches. He made it clear that, Human Resource Export Strategy has been devised with the target to train up to five lac youth during the next one year, and they would be sent abroad for employment. The chief minister also urged upon private sector institutions and authorities to extend their support to the provincial government for this national cause adding that the role of Al-Khidmat Foundation in this regard is commendable.

He hoped that the Memorandum of Understanding between Al-Khidmat Foundation and KPITB would significantly help to meet the requirements of digital skills in the province. The chief minister has underlined the need to initiate implementation of this MoU without any delay, and directed the authorities concerned to take necessary steps for this purpose.

He hoped that the Memorandum of Understanding between Al-Khidmat Foundation and KPITB would significantly help to meet the requirements of digital skills in the province. The chief minister has underlined the need to initiate implementation of this MoU without any delay, and directed the authorities concerned to take necessary steps for this purpose.

Iran hands over bodies of 9 Pakistani labourers

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Iran on Thursday handed over bodies of Pakistani labourers killed in Sistan Baluchestan. The bodies were handed over to Pakistani authorities at the Pak-Iran border by Iranian Border Security Guards.

The mortal remains of Pakistani nationals were received by Assistant Commissioner Taftan, Waqar Kakar. The incident was condemned by the Iranian authorities and an inquiry was ordered. Iranian envoy to Pakistan in his statement condemned the killings of Pakistani labourers in Iran and said Tehran and Islamabad will not tolerate affliction of damage to the countries' relations.

On January 27, unknown assailants gunned down at least nine Pakistani nationals and injured three others in the suburb of the city of Saravan in the southeastern Iranian province of Sistan Baluchestan. According to the information available, among the victims, five hailed from different areas of Alipur in Punjab province and had been working in Iran for the past decade.

DPO Kohat appears before PHC

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: District Police Officer (DPO) Kohat Muhammad Farhan appeared on Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan direction in writ plea against arrest of local government chairman Nabi Ullah from court's premises, on Thursday.

Chief Justice PHC Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan ordered applicants for recording statement with Additional Registrar Judicial. However, DPO Kohat denied custody of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) LG chairman Nabi Ullah by any policemen and assured stern action after production evidence in this regard.

DPO further informed that concerned petitioner didn't approached police till today and added that he upheld the supremacy of law and it is also his professional responsibility.

The counsel Khurram Zeeshan and Shah Faisal advocates argued that Nabi Ullah was arrest on 19th January in front district courts Kohat by police along with other personnel in civil dress while added that whereabouts of PTI worker is still unknown. The competent authorities didn't fulfill their duties despite several pleas for recovery of Nabi Ullah, the counsel argued.

In the meantime, Chief Justice inquired from DPO Kohat Farhan had petitioner has placed allegation on police for arrest of Nabi Ullah from court's premises. However, DPO denied custody of Nabi Ullah and informed that several raids were conducted on different police posts along with court's bill off but the petitioner's brother was identified there as police didn't took him into custody.

Chief Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan observed that PHC will look

into Contempt of Court proceedings against concerned official if Nabi Ullah custody proved and ordered petitioner to record statement with Additional Registrar Judicial and name officials who arrested PTI worker from court's premises.

Court seeks reply for direct election on minority seats plea: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice Shakeel Ahmad and Justice Fahim Wali ordered the federal's government for submission of reply in writ against minority reserved seats 18th constitutional amendment, on Thursday.

The counsel Nauman Mohib Kakakhel advocate argued that in 18th constitutional amendments special quota is reserved for minority community for representation in parliament in 2010. In the Articles 51 and 106 of the Constitution of Pakistan reserved quota was enshrined, the counsel added.