

**Imran's bail extended**  
**F.P. Report**  
LAHORE: An anti-terrorism court on Friday extended the interim bail of the PTI founder in seven cases related to May 9 vandalism till February 3. A junior of senior counsel Salman Safdar appeared in the court of Arshad Javed and informed him that the lawyer was busy with some cases in Islamabad. The court directed Advocate Safdar to appear before it today and adjourned the hearing.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar chairing the 9th meeting of the Apex Committee of Special Investment Facilitation Council.

## 24 terrorists killed in Mach, Kolpur: ISPR

**F.P. Report**  
RAWALPINDI: At least 24 terrorists were killed by law enforcement agencies during the "firefights and sanitisation/clearance operations" which lasted for three days in Mach and Kolpur in Balochistan, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement on Friday.  
The key terrorists — killed after they attacked the Mach and Kolpur Complexes in Balochistan on the night of January 29 and 30 — include Shehzad Baloch, Attaullah, Salah Uddin, Abdul Wadood and Zeeshan, said the military's media wing. "The identification process of remaining terrorists is in process, the military's media wing stated," the statement read.  
During an intense exchange of fire with terrorists, at least four brave law enforcement agencies personnel and two civilians embraced martyrdom.  
The martyred LEAs personnel fought gallantly against the terrorists.  
"Law enforcement agencies deputed on security offered stiff resistance and forced the attackers to repulse," the ISPR said in its statement. The statement further read that these terrorists were then hunted down in the ensuing sanitisation and clearance operations which have now been concluded after clearing and securing the area.  
The ISPR mentioned the an effective response by LEAs is a testament to their unrelenting resolve in the fight against terrorism. "Pakistan's Security Forces stand shoulder to shoulder with other Law Enforcement Agencies to ensure peace and stability in the country."  
The operation by the LEAs began as terrorists launched multiple attacks on Mach and Kolpur Complexes in Balochistan earlier this week. The security forces repulsed a "fire raid" attempt by Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) terrorists in Balochistan's Mach late Monday, sources had told media.  
Mach city echoed with explosions and plunged into darkness after terrorists fired several rockets from mountains, followed by heavy gunfire. People were trapped in their homes due to explosions and firing while firing also started in Kolpur town and the Gokhart Bibi Nani area.  
According to security sources, unidentified persons fired 15 rockets from the mountains at 9:30pm in the Mach area of Kuchi Bolan. Sources added security forces had received intelligence about the terrorist attack and laid an ambush for the terrorists. The terrorists retreated after being overwhelmed by the effective response of the security forces, they added.

## Masses need to vote for sincere leaders: Fazl

**F.P. Report**  
TANK: Ameer Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) Maulana Fazlur Rehman has urged the masses to vote for trustworthy and sincere leaders for the country during the upcoming general elections.  
Addressing a public gathering in Tank on Friday, he said that Pakistan was currently passing through an important phase of elections, providing an opportunity to citizens to elect those leaders who had pro-country ideology and whose politics aimed at masses' interest and welfare.  
Fazlur Rehman said that JUI-F had always faced off those elements who strived to promote vulgarity among youth and pursue politics that threatened the country's foundation. JUI-F did not want enmity with anyone, but it would not let someone advance an external agenda which aimed at weakening the country, he added.  
He said that JUI-F's manifesto was in accordance with the Islamic principles and wanted a true welfare state where people felt secure with having ample employment opportunities and enjoying their due rights. Thus, the JUI-F chief asked people that it was high time to carry out their own introspection and wisely use their right to vote, which he described as a sacred piece of paper, playing a key role in shaping the future of nations. Fazlur Rehman also said that ANP at Tank had announced its support for JUI-F in the district and expressed gratitude to them in this regard.

## I want to serve nation sans discrimination: Bilawal

**F.P. Report**  
SHIKARPUR: Chairman of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has said that the burden of the battle for the "Takht-e-Lahore" is being borne by the people in the form of inflation, unemployment, and poverty. He added that other parties want to divide the populace on the basis of religion, language, and sectarianism, while, "I want to serve the nation without discrimination."  
According to the press release issued by Media Cell Bilawal House, the PPP chairman reached Shikarpur from Naudero on Friday in connection with his nationwide election campaign, where a charged crowd of people welcomed him and listened his speech. In his address, he said that if there is any party that can solve the problems of the people, it is only his party, the PPP. "I have prepared a People's Economic Agreement, which is my 10-point agenda. I will fight unemployment, inflation, and poverty by becoming your Prime Minister. These are 'the real problems of the people of Pakistan.' The people of Pakistan want a government that can reduce inflation, which can provide employment to the youth. You know that the PPP has been fighting the problems of unemployment and poverty faced by the people for three generations, not from today," he added. He recalled that when Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto was alive, it used to be a popular slogan among the people that "Benazir Aaey Gi, Rozgar Laey Gi (Benazir will come, bring employment)." "The next government will be of the PPP, and I will complete the unfinished mission of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, and provide employment for the youth," he vowed.  
Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that after the 2018 elections, whether he was in the opposition or in the government, he represented the people's voice. He said that we faced many difficulties in the form of the Covid-19 pandemic and floods. "When I came here (Shikarpur) during the floods, the victims, especially the women, demanded that their houses be built. Despite a few months left for the government's term to end, I traveled around the world and raised funds to build houses for flood victims. We are build-

ing two million houses for the flood victims, and I will fulfill that promise. I will give the ownership rights of these houses to the women of these houses," he added.  
The PPP chairman said that except his party, all other parties are doing politics of hatred and division. "Old politicians have turned dissent into personal enmity. It is harming Pakistan; Pakistan's economy is suffering," he said, adding that the same forces want to sow the seeds of politics of hatred and division in Sindh as well. He said the PPP does not believe in the politics of hatred, division, and revenge. "If you support me on February 8, I will bury the politics of hatred and division by becoming your prime minister," he pledged.  
Bilawal Bhutto Zardari appealed to the people to make his party's candidates successful by stamping the Arrow symbol on February 8. He appealed to the participants to make Agha Siraj Durrani, Imtiaz Ahmed Shaikh, Shehryar Mahar, Arif Khan Mahar, Mehboob Ali Khan Bijarani, and Mir Shabbir Bijarani successful in the elections, due next week. "I want 100 per cent seats from Shikarpur, yes 100 percent.

## PML-N always fulfilled its commitments: Nawaz

**F.P. Report**  
FAISALABAD: Three-time prime minister and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo, Muhammad Nawaz Sharif has said that his party would introduce an Orange Line Train besides providing employment opportunities for residents of Faisalabad.  
While addressing a massive gathering of party workers Dhoobi Ghaat ground during election campaign, he alleged Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) of making empty promises with the public and said that PML-N always fulfilled its commitments by grace of Allah Almighty. Nawaz Sharif directed party President Shehbaz Sharif to address the problem of unemploy-

ment in Faisalabad within the next five years.  
He said that the PML-N government was busy in fighting terrorism when its rival PTI was engaged in staging sit-in. Whether any of you had received a house or employment as promised by the PTI, he questioned the participants of gathering.  
The PML-N supreme leader said that the PTI made only empty promises as during 2018 election campaign it had pledged to construct five million houses and provided 10 million jobs. He also criticized the PTI for deceiving the public in the name of the one-billion tree plantation campaign.  
Nawaz emphasized that every individual should have some form of employment. He promised that he

would work hard to bring those days back when a roti (bread) cost Rs4, a kilo sugar cost Rs50, a litre petrol cost Rs 65 and most of the vegetables were priced Rs 10 per kg. The PML-N supremo also mentioned that during his tenure as the country's prime minister, one tola (11.67 grams) of gold cost around Rs 50,000.  
Earlier, upon his arrival at the venue of the rally, PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif received a rousing welcome from cheerful party supporters and workers. The venue reverberated with the slogan, "We love you, Nawaz Sharif - We love you, Nawaz Sharif". "I love you too, Faisalabad walo - Long live Faisalabad" a jubilant Nawaz said as he took the stage to address the massive gathering.

# The Frontier Post

**Blast leaves three injured**  
**F.P. Report**  
QUETTA: In a disturbing incident on Friday, an improvised explosive device (IED) detonated along the eastern bypass in Quetta. The blast resulted in two individuals sustaining injuries, prompting a swift response from local law enforcement. The explosion occurred during the busy hours of the day, catching commuters and bystanders off guard.

## Apex body satisfied over overall progress of SIFC

**F.P. Report**  
ISLAMABAD: The Apex Committee of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) on Friday showed profound satisfaction over the overall progress of the SIFC and appreciated 'Whole of Government Approach' in realising the envisioned dividends.  
The 9th meeting of the SIFC Apex Committee met under the chair of Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar which reviewed various initiatives being steered through the forum. The meeting was attended by the Chief of Army Staff, federal cabinet, provincial chief ministers and high-level government officials.  
The ministries presented progress on the projects and policy initiatives, and gave plans for subsequent endeavours to attract the investment. The Apex Committee reviewed progress on various measures and appreciated the contribution made for improving macro and micro-economic conditions of the country. The body commended the steps taken to build a sustainable ecosystem for nurturing latent potential and attracting investments, with special emphasis on the cross sectoral policy interventions, human resource development, infrastructural uplift and strengthening of domestic dispute resolution mechanism. The Committee reviewed and appreciated the progress on the level of economic engagements with friendly countries and underscored the need to efficiently realise investment commitments into economic dividends.  
The Apex body also accorded in-principle approval for Strategic Canals Vision 2030 and FBR Reforms. The Chief of the Army Staff assured firm resolve of the Pakistan Army to support the government's initiatives for the economic stability of the country and the socio-economic well-being of its people. In the end, the prime minister appreciated the role of SIFC, ministries, departments and affiliated stakeholders in accomplishing the major economic milestones as part of the interim government and setting the pace for future endeavours. He also urged the incoming government to ensure continuity of economic policies by capitalising on the positive momentum, established by SIFC, in the larger interest of the country.  
**Mind games important for fostering physical, mental growth in youth: PM:** Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar emphasizing the importance of sports, particularly mind games, in fostering both physical and mental development of youth, said that the chess game helps to instill discipline in individuals' thought processes.  
Addressing the launch of the Prime Minister's National Mind Sports Initiative, the prime minister highlighted the positive impact of such mind games on mental well-being and said the youth engaged in such healthy activities would become successful professionals in the future. He said these games promote cognitive activity and critical thinking among the players.  
The prime minister said he was happy that he made a commitment to this special cause, and he will also continue to support and promote this cause in the future. He said every school in the country should have access to this game. Acknowledging the contribution of the federal minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination Fawad Hassan Fawad PM Kakar said that due to his personal efforts, the launch of this initiative became possible.  
Fawad Hassan Fawad, on the occasion, informed that, under the initiative, the facility of mind games would be provided at 10,000 public schools across the country. "We are going to take it across all the public schools in Pakistan, and we are also engaging the corporate sector and inviting the private schools to have this in every single school in the country," he added. The minister said that in the first month, some 100 schools in Islamabad would be given the facility. The minister also recalled the tremendous performance of late Mir Sultan Khan, a native chess player from Sargodha, who won the British Chess Championship in 1929, 1931, and 1932.  
To acknowledge the performance of Mir Sultan Khan, President Arkady Dvorkovich presented an award to Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar, who received the award on behalf of Mir Sultan Khan. The President of the International Chess Federation, speaking on the occasion, said that besides being a mind game, chess was a lot of fun too. He said this game was very important for a country like Pakistan, where millions of young people were growing up.  
He said, "Some 600,000 kids in 10,000 schools in Pakistan will have the chance to get access to this game. He said the federation will support and train the teachers, who will then train kids." The Managing Director (MD) of the International Chess Federation, Dana Reznicec-Ozola, President of the Asian Chess Federation, Sheikh Sultan bin Khaleefa Alnahay, and President of the Pakistan Chess Federation, Muhammad Hanif Qureshi, were also present on the occasion.



PESHAWAR: KP Caretaker Chief Minister, Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah chairing a meeting of Elementary and Secondary Education Department.

## Court to fast-track hearing of Model Town tragedy case

**F.P. Report**  
LAHORE: An anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Lahore while rejecting a plea of Pakistan Awami Tehreek's lawyers to defer Model Town tragedy case for an indefinite time, ordered that from now on the case will be heard twice a week on the directive of the Supreme Court.  
ATC judge Arshad Javed Chadhar adjourned the hearing till February 6. Earlier, the defendant counsel Burhan Moazzam told the court that 9-year lapsed, despite 123 hearing of the case, Pakistan Awami Tehreek's counsel were using delaying tactics. The counsel appealed that the case should be heard on regular basis.  
On the occasion Ch Naemuddin advocate, the counsel of Pakistan Awami Tehreek requested the court that till the presentation of new JIT report on the incident, no further hearing should be fixed. The complainant counsel requested that trial of Shahbaz Sharif, Rana Sanullah should be initiated at the same time. All the accused including police officers appeared in the court for the attendance. There are 124 accused in Model Town Tragedy case in which 14 activists were killed and more than 100 workers of PAT were injured in a clash with police.  
Four accused including former SSP police Umer Virk, ex DSP Khalid Abu Bakar, Mian Shafqat and former SI Bashir Niazi had filed appeals for their acquittal in the case. While 5 accused including former IG Police Mushtaq Sukhera and DIG Operation Rana Abdul Jabbar have already acquitted in the case.

## Over 20m first time voters get ready to cost votes in election

ISLAMABAD (INP): As Pakistan braces itself for the upcoming general elections, an unprecedented wave of enthusiasm is sweeping over more than 20 million young individuals who are set to cast their votes for the very first time. Recognizing the potential influence of this substantial voting bloc, it becomes crucial to educate these new voters on the correct procedures for participating in the democratic process.  
When heading to the polling booth, the initial step involves the verification of the original national identity card by the polling officer. Details entered in the electoral roll will be scrutinized, and names and serial numbers will be called aloud for confirmation. A thumb impression and an indelible ink mark on the thumb will follow, marking the completion of this first phase.  
Moving on to the second stage, Assistant Presiding Officers will distribute green-colored ballot papers for the National Assembly and white-colored ballot papers for the Provincial Assembly.  
These papers, signed and sealed at the back, are then handed over to voters. Behind the privacy of the voting screen, individuals are encouraged to stamp their ballot papers correctly with the electoral mark of their chosen candidate.  
Green ballot papers are designated for the National Assembly, to be placed in the corresponding green-lidded ballot box, while white ballot papers for the Provincial Assembly should be deposited in the white-lidded ballot box.  
Before heading to the polling station, it is crucial for voters to adhere to specific instructions. Bringing the original National Identity Card is mandatory, and even an expired card will be acceptable. Maintaining the confidentiality of the vote is stressed, and it's emphasized that mobile phones and cameras are strictly prohibited within the polling station.  
The voting process is scheduled to commence at 8 am and conclude at 6 pm. Importantly, voters within the polling station will be allowed to cast their votes even after the official closing time.

## PTI leader irregularities in court proceedings

ISLAMABAD (INP): Barrister Gohar Ali Khan, a prominent central leader of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), expressed concerns over what he claims are irregularities in court proceedings leading to recent judgments.  
Addressing the media outside Adiala Jail on Friday, Barrister Gohar lamented the alleged denial of opportunities to PTI lawyers during the trial. He highlighted a specific incident where, despite requests, the legal team was not granted a chance to present their case. The barrister further criticized the judge for displaying statements of 342 accused individuals on a mobile phone during the proceedings.  
Moreover, Barrister Gohar disputed the accuracy of the judge's depiction of PTI lawyers in the judgment. He argued that PTI lawyers consistently attend court sessions but have been unfairly sidelined. He accused some lawyers, who were not officially appointed, of appearing against PTI, raising questions about the legitimacy of the prosecution team.  
Addressing the Tashakhana case, Barrister Gohar defended Bushra Bibi, asserting that she played no role in the matter. He urged a thorough examination of the records, claiming that she neither acquired nor sold any gifts. Accusing the punishment and fine as political retaliation, Barrister Gohar emphasized a perceived motive to sideline Imran Khan. Expressing intent to file an appeal this week, he hopes to overturn the decision and secure the release of those implicated.  
The PTI leader characterized the entire legal process as political vengeance, alleging a breach of fundamental principles in the judgments. He underscored that Bushra Bibi had no involvement in the Tashakhana case, insisting that her innocence is evident in a comprehensive review of the records. The overarching sentiment conveyed by Barrister Gohar is that the decisions serve as a message signaling Imran Khan's political sidelining.





# DEMP, QMMB organize event on ‘Kashmir Day with educational artwork

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Directorate of Electronic Media and Publications (DEMP) in collaboration with Quaid-e-Azam Mazar Management Board (QMMB) commemorated the Kashmir Day.

The ceremony was organized in accordance with Kashmir Day at Quaid e Azam Mazar, Karachi on 2nd February. Director General Press Information Department Ms. Erum Tanveer honored as Chief Guest.

The intra-school art competition programme was meant to show solidarity with Kashmir and its people struggle for freedom.

Different child students participated in the art work competition where they showcased their thoughts in support of occupied Kashmiri people under Indian oppression. In her address, Chief Guest Ms. Erum Tanveer praised the

commemorations of such events and also lauded the hardships of DEMP & QMMB to arrange such influential events. She remarked that by celebrating this day, young kids had the idea that what was happening in Kashmir.

While talking at the event Ms. Erum told the participants that Kashmir issue resolution had been passed in UN and this issue had to be resolved according to it. She highlighted that until today the issue was remain unsolved because we lowered our voices in favor of Kashmir freedom. She pointed out that our seniors didn't connect the youngsters in connection to their history.

Ms. Erum stressed that youth must be engaged in these issues because they were the future of this country. She also shared her pleasure to talk with young kids as they were always energetic. She also said that state had the prime responsibility

to ensure engagements of young minds into national affairs.

Deputy Director DEMP Ms. Mehreen hosted the ceremony and briefed the Chief Guest about students' work. Chief Guest visited the art work displays and appreciated the efforts of all students.

Chief Guest distributed the award certificates to top three students. Meanwhile, Chief Guest Ms. Erum Tanveer presented with a shield by Resident Engineer Quaid-e-Azam Mazar Abdul Aleem Shaikh.

DD DEMP Ms. Mehreen said that celebrating Kashmir Day was a national duty and to teach upcoming generation about the hardships of Kashmiri people.

Secretary QMMB Resident Engineer Abdul Aleem Shaikh shared his views that this competition opportunity was to enhance children's ability to understand Kashmir issue and encouraged students for their hard-work.



KARACHI: DG PID Ms. Erum Tanveer distribute award certificates among students of the competition at the Kashmir Day event organized by DEMP and QMMB at Quaid Mausoleum.

## ‘Provincial govt prepared for conducting polls on Feb 8’

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Caretaker Minister of Information, Minority Affairs and Social Security, Muhammad Ahmad Shah, Friday, said that general elections were going to be held on February 8 and all the provincial governments were fully prepared for the polls.

He addressing a press conference at Sindh Assembly building regarding the election arrangements and law and order situation, said that all the necessary arrangements were being made according to the instructions of the Election Commission of Pakistan and Sindh government had released funds for all requirements of the elections.

The entire government and all the institutions were extending the fullest cooperation to the Election Commission of Pakistan for conducting general elections 2024 in a free, fair and transparent manner, he added.

Ahmad Shah said that preparations for the polls had been going on for many months including the measures to improve law and order and a security plan was in place and a backup plan was also envisaged.

He informed that the total number of polling stations in the province is 19006, among them 5989 are declared normal, 6531 as sensitive and 6496 as highly sensitive polling stations. As many as 1,22,030 police personnel will be deployed for ensuring security and maintaining law and order during the elections while 7000 personnel of Police Quick Response Force along with 550 of Sindh Excise Police would also be deputed on election security duties.

Besides provincial law enforcement agencies, Rangers and Pakistan Army would also be available for the security, he said and added that Pakistan Army would be deployed at sensitive polling stations from February 5 to February 10.

More than 6000 CCTV cameras will be installed on polling stations and in case of any untoward situation, the data will be preserved and available, he informed adding that computers and wireless systems had been installed as well.

The minister said that 22870 Lady Health Workers were also deputed on election duties while a fund of Rs 1.5 billion had been released for necessary works at 368 schools those were

affected by the recent floods.

He informed that presiding officers would not be allowed to go home from the polling stations till completion of the entire polling process while leaves of the staff posted at the polling stations had been canceled.

Previously, no action was taken against the absent employees but now action would be taken against those who would abstain from performing national duty in the election, he added.

The minister said that he was in touch with all major political parties and he had requested them to extend their cooperation during the election process.

Responding to a query, he said that section 144 Cr.P.C had been enforced across the province but mobile Phone services should not be shut down on the polling day.

If any untoward situation arises in any area we will consider the option according to the situation, he added.

The minister said that Pakistan's enemies were trying in every possible way to make the situation worse, both internally and externally but our security forces were committed to thwart such nefarious designs.

## LGH equipped with modern MRI, CT scan machines

LAHORE (APP): In a significant stride towards enhancing healthcare facilities, Caretaker Punjab Health Minister Professor Dr. Javed Akram inaugurated modern MRI and CT scan machines at the Lahore General Hospital (LGH), with a total investment of Rs 720 million.

During the inaugural ceremony on Friday, the minister emphasised the government's commitment, under the vision of CM Punjab Mohsin Naqvi, to provide cutting-edge medical equipment to public hospitals.

He underscored the capacity and quality of the newly installed machines, asserting their significance in delivering optimal healthcare services. Later, while addressing a press conference, the minister outlined the caretaker Punjab government's extensive efforts, allocating Rs 96 billion for the revamp of over 100 government hospitals.

He expressed gratitude towards the leadership of the CM, affirming his dedication to serving the people and leaving a lasting positive impact.

Principal of Ameeruddin Medical College Prof. Al-Fareed Zafar highlighted the crucial role the new machines would play in timely diagnosis and treatment, particularly for trauma cases.

With these latest additions, patients no longer need to seek such diagnostic services outside the hospital premises.

Prof. Al-Fareed Zafar commended the relentless efforts of the caretaker government in overseeing the renovation projects, leading to substantial improvements in healthcare infrastructure across the province.

He underscored the exemplary dedication of the chief minister and his team, whose tireless commitment ensured swift completion of numerous welfare and development initiatives.

## LESCO detects 402 power pilferers in 24 hours

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) detected a total of 402 connections from where the customers were pilfering electricity in all its circles of five districts -- Lahore, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, Kasur and Okara -- on the 145th day of anti-power theft campaign.

A LESCO spokesman told the media on Friday that the company had also submitted FIR applications against 402 electricity thieves, out of which 173 FIRs have been registered in respective police stations, while 06 accused have been arrested.

Grand anti-power theft operations against electricity thieves are being conducted on the directives of the Federal Power Division and the LESCO Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Engineer Shahid Haider is supervising these operations.

The LESCO chief vowed that the operations would continue without discrimination until the complete end of electricity theft.

The electricity pilferers as well as the LESCO officers and employees who facilitate them are also being brought to justice.

On the 145th consecutive day of the anti-power theft campaign, the spokesman added, large commercial consumers were also found involved in

electricity theft and all of them were also disconnected and charged with detection units.

Among the seized connections 15 were commercial, 01 agricultural, 05 industrial and 381 domestic, and all these connections were disconnected and charged with a total of 310,268 units as detection bill amounting to Rs 11.763 million.

Apprising the media about some major power pilferers, he explained that LESCO charged Rs 01 million detection to an electricity pilferer in Green Town; Rs 300,000 fine in the form of detection bill to a customer stealing electricity in Manawan area of Lahore; Rs 256,352 to another power pilferer in Batapur area and Rs 200,000 detection bills respectively to two power thieves in Garhi Shahu area.

During the 145 days of grand anti-theft campaign, the spokesman mentioned, the LESCO detected pilferage on 50,557 power connections and submitted 50,269 FIR applications against electricity thieves in the relevant police stations out of which 46,844 FIRs have been registered, while 17,444 accused have so far been arrested by the police.

The LESCO has so far charged a total of 70,597,697 detection units worth Rs 2,735,497,194 to all the power pilferers.

## Lahore police finalises security plan for General Election 2024

LAHORE (APP): An important meeting, convened at Police Lines Qilla Gujjar Singh, chaired by Capital City Police Officer Bilal Siddique Kamyana, finalised meticulous planning for peaceful conduct of the General Election 2024. A comprehensive review of security measures was undertaken. DIG (Operations) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi presented a detailed briefing on the election process and security protocols for polling day.

CCPO Kamyana affirmed Lahore Police's full preparedness for orderly conduct of the elections as far as security was concerned. Emphasizing zero-tolerance approach, he declared that stringent action would be taken against jubilant firing and display of weapons during the election campaign and polling day.

The meeting mandated acquisition of surety bonds from individuals with a history of longstanding enmity. The CCPO underscored that law-breaking elements would face firm measures during the election campaign. He directed the supervisory officers to maintain constant communication with district returning officers, presiding officers, district administration, and all stake-

holders. He stressed the importance of regular visits to polling stations, camp offices, and duty points to assess and ensure adequacy of arrangements.

The CCPO instructed police officers and officials to remain vigilant until completion of vote counting, ensuring the secure transfer of relevant polling materials. Any negligence related to duty would be met with departmental action, he warned.

Teams from Dolphin Force, Special Protection Unit and Elite Force were assigned continuous patrols on polling day, with additional traffic police deployed for public convenience.

The CCPO Lahore reiterated the commitment to guarantee peaceful conduct of election activities and polling in the provincial capital. The meeting saw the participation of DIG CIA Captain (ret'd) Liaquat Ali Malik, DIG Security Kamran Adil, and DIG Investigation Imran Kishwar, along with several other key officials. SSP Operations Syed Ali Raza, SSP Investigation Anooch Masood Chaudhry, SSP Discipline Soheb Ashraf, CTO Lahore, Divisional SPs, SP CRO, SP Dolphin, circle officers, SHOs and in-charge investigations were also present.

KARACHI (APP): Commissioner Karachi Division Muhammad Saleem Rajput has cancelled the leaves of all the polling staff and directed them to report back immediately, in case of failure to comply with these directives the absentees could be placed under suspension, besides initiating disciplinary proceedings against them.

Commissioner Karachi has directed the District Returning Officers (DROs) and Returning Officers (ROs) of all Karachi divisions regarding the cancellation of undue exemptions/leaves allowed to polling staff for the upcoming general elections in 2024.

Commissioner Karachi observed that it has come to his knowledge that certain polling staff have been granted exemptions/leaves without cause. This has caused considerable apprehension that this unwarranted action may cause a shortage of polling staff on Election Day, he added. It is very important to note that onerous efforts at the highest level have gone into fulfilling the 67,420 polling staff requirement for Election duties in Karachi Division, the Commissioner observed.

He directed that services of all of the staff as provided by the Election Commission of Pakistan through the respective District Election Commissioners (DECs) shall be utilized for the February 08 elections.

He said that no exemptions shall be provided except those allowed under the relevant rules.

All exemptions granted till date shall be cancelled immediately. The individuals shall be called back for training and shall perform polling duties in the upcoming general elections, he directed.

## INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

- Office of the Addl. Inspector General of Police, Counter Terrorism Department (CTD), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Peshawar invites sealed bids for Special/Petty repair under Competitive Bidding from well-reputed firms/contractors for the financial year 2023-2024 for Peshawar Regional HQrs including offices, Washrooms, Lockups etc.
- Bidding shall be conducted through Single Stage-One Envelope Bidding Procedure in comprising a single package containing one envelope as per KPPRA Rules- 2014. Envelope shall contain technical and financial bid. The firms are bound to provide complete information of the bidder along with its postal as well as valid email address and phone number/s on the envelope.
- Bidding documents, detailed description, and quantities of items, can be obtained from the office of the undersigned during office hours till **22/02/2024** against the non-refundable cash payment of Pak Rupees One thousand (Rs. 1000/-PKR). The Bidding Documents can also be downloaded from the following official website of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police, Peshawar at [www.kppolice.gov.pk](http://www.kppolice.gov.pk)
- The bids shall reach the Office of the undersigned through registered Dak or Courier Services on or before **22/02/2024 at 11.00AM**. The bids shall be opened on the same day by the Procurement committee in the presence of Representatives of the bidders who chose to attend at 11:30 AM in committee room of Office of the Addl. Inspector General of Police, Counter Terrorism Department Addl. IG CTD, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Peshawar. Bid submitted after due date & time shall not be entertained.
- The bid must be accompanied with Bid Security @ 2% of the bid value in the shape of Demand Draft (DD) or Call Deposit Receipt (CDR) in the name of the undersigned.
- Contractor should be registered with Govt. of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (C&W, KPRA etc).
- Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) License of Contractor should be renewed for the year 2023-24.
- The bidders shall submit an undertaking, on stamp paper, in their proposal that the requisite Bid Security is included in their Financial Bid. Late bids will be treated as non-responsive.
- Bids/Rates shall be quoted in Pak Rupees and on FOR basis inclusive taxes where applicable.
- The undersigned reserves the right to reject any or all the bids as per provisions contained in Rule 47 of KPPRA Procurement Rules 2014.

**Addl. Inspector General of Police,**  
Counter Terrorism Department (CTD),  
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Peshawar. Tel: 091-9212518-19  
Email: [adlignp@ctdkppolice.gov.pk](mailto:adlignp@ctdkppolice.gov.pk) Fax: 091-9212530

INF(P)199/24

## CORRIGENDUM

It is hereby notified for information to all concerned that the tender published in daily Newspaper vide No. INF(P)114-2024 Dated 20/01/2024 with last date of submission of 13/02/2024. In the said NIT work at Serial No. 2 will be opened on same day Date & Time ie 13/02/2024 at 12:00 PM with same terms and conditions

However due to technical issue in official website of C&W Department the Works at Serial No. 1 ie "AOM&R OF ALL GOVT. ROADS INCLUDING CLEARANCE OF ROAD WAY/REMOVAL OF LANDSLIDING SLIPS ETC DISTRICT SHANGLA FOR THE YEAR (2023-24) SH:- Saving Amount/Balance Work" with extension of response time last date of opening submission may considered/read as 16/02/2024 (12.00 PM)

All other term & condition will be remained same as published in NIT.

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER

INF(P)  
214/2024



## PAF BASE, PESHAWAR TENDER NOTICE : BWO FLT

PAF Base, Peshawar requires different Conservancy items (Mops, Surf, Wiper, Limestone, Acid, Brooms, Plastic Lota Plastic Dustbin, Brush, Toilet Rolls, Soap, Hand Wash, Sanitizer, Sweep, Neel, Steel Dustbin, Vim Powder, Drain Opener, Trolley (for housekeeping), Floor Polish, Liquid & Powder etc) for Financial year 2023-2024. Last date for submission of tender applications is **19 February, 2024**, at 1000 Hrs. Tenders will be opened on the same day, at 1300 Hrs. Any Tender application maybe rejected on technical grounds.

**Note: Quotations may be sent in favour of BWO, PAF Base, Peshawar. Detail specification may be obtained on Tel No: 091-9505031-5037, Mob: 0323-9411311.**



LAHORE: Posters and banners on display in preparation of General Election-2024.





PESHAWAR: KP Caretaker Minister for Transport, Zafarullah Khan Umerzai meeting with Chairperson of Provincial Ombudsman Rakhshanda Naz at her office.

## Ex-CM Haider Hoti, Atif Khan in face off on NA 22-Mardan-2

MARDAN (APP): Election fever has gripped Mardan district where tough electoral battle is expected between former Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ameer Haider Khan Hoti and PTI backed former Provincial Minister Atif Khan on the national assembly constituency NA-22 Mardan-II.

As only six days left in the general election 2024, the political parties and independent candidates expedited addressing rallies and corner meetings besides door to door campaigns to persuade voters. The candidates started using social media and floating advertisements in national newspapers for publicity. All eyes on NA-22 Mardan-II where ANP had awarded a ticket to former Chief Minister Amir Haider Khan Hoti who is being challenged by former KP senior minister Muhammad Atif Khan backed by PTI.

In the 2013 general election, the constituency was won by Haider Hoti with 44,769 votes against PTI's Nasir Khan secured 42,068 votes. In the 2018 general election, Haider Hoti retained his seat with 78,911 votes defeating Atif Khan with only 35 votes. The political rivals are again contesting elections against each other and sought support of large tribes. On NA 21- Mardan-I, former MNA Mujahid Khan is contesting election as an independent candidate with the electoral symbol "Dove" on NA-21-Mardan-1 who is

being challenged by ANP, PPP and JUIF candidates.

In 2013 general election, Mujahid Khan secured 38,233 votes defeating Imdadullah Yousafzai of JUIF with 26,625 votes while in 2018 general election this constituency was again clinched by Mujahid Khan on PTI ticket with 78,140 votes against ANP's Gul Nawaz Khan with 38,712 votes. On NA-23-Mardan-3, former federal minister Ali Muhammad is flexing muscle independently with the electoral symbol "Dolphin" while PTI's former MPA Toufai Anjum as independent candidate with the symbol "Pillow" on PK-55, Mardan-2.

Former MNA Ali Muhammad had won 2013 election of PTI ticket with 58,577 votes against 56,318 voters while JUIF Maulana Muhammad Qasim stood runner up with 56,318 votes respectively. The constituency was won by the PTI founder with 76,681 votes against Maulana Qasim's of JUIF with 68,181 votes. According to ECP, the total registered voters in Mardan district stand at 1,538,078, including 696,382 women for whom 1,055 polling stations including 353 male, 319 female while 383 polling stations combined.

A total of 42 candidates, including two women, are in the run for all these three national assembly seats while about 105 candidates, including three women, are competing for eight provincial assembly seats in

politically fertile Mardan district. Professor Dr A.H.Hilali, former Political Science Department, University of Peshawar while expecting split mandates in Mardan said that young voters would play key role in deciding fates of ANP, JUIF, PPP, PTI, PMLN and others independents on February 8, 2024.

The mainstream political parties including PTI, PMLN and PPP had already announced election manifestos that would play an important role in deciding the fate of their candidates on D-Day. "Participation of women in voting is mandatory as per election laws and candidates have to work tirelessly to bring voters into polling stations on February 8, 2024," he said.

Muhammad Ishaq, a resident of Moti Banda Mardan said that unemployment, poor sanitation and poverty were major challenges and candidates with solid programs for its resolution would be voted to power. He said that provision of clean drinking water and provision of loans to farmers for agriculture and livestock promotion would help generate employment opportunities besides alleviating poverty in rural areas. He demanded that Tehsil Katlang villages should be connected with Swat Motorway besides construction of a technical vocational institute to prepare the area's youth for overseas employment and promotion of industrialization.

### Chief Khateeb advocates KP tobacco reduction

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a significant move that challenges the tobacco industry's harm reduction narrative, Chief Khateeb of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Mr. Molana Tayab Qureshi, has issued a powerful call to action against the use of e-cigarettes and vaping, highlighting their dangers and addictive nature. Molana Tayab Qureshi, who is also the Khateeb of the historic Masjid Mohabat Khan and Mohatam of the influential Madrassa Jama Ashrifiya, has reached out to all district Khateebes and prayer leaders across the province, urging them to educate their communities about the harms of nicotine-laden products.

This initiative comes in the wake of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government's recent interim ban on the sale of e-cigarettes and vapes to individuals below the age of 21 and within 50 meters of educational institutions, as per Section 144 for the period of 2 months. This unprecedented measure underscores the province's commitment to safeguarding the health and well-being of its youth and educational environments.

Molana Tayab Qureshi's letter to the District Khateebes and prayer leaders not only endorses this ban but also emphasizes the need for widespread awareness about the adverse effects of e-cigarettes, vapes, and other harmful substances like nicotine, tobacco, ice and charrs. He highlighted that the consumption of these substances is contrary to Islamic teachings and detrimental to the health and welfare of society at large.

Moreover, Molana Tayab Qureshi has expressed his appreciation for the role of civil society organizations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in bringing attention to this critical issue. He has called for a complete ban on the sale and use of e-cigarettes and vapes throughout the province, signaling a strong stance against the tobacco industry's efforts to market these products as less harmful alternatives to traditional smoking.

## Sohail defends PhD dissertation

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: PhD Scholar Sohail Noor successfully defended his PhD dissertation titled "Value Addition of Slurry Waste from Marble Industry for Eco-Industrial Development" at the Department of Environmental Sciences, University of Peshawar on February and has qualified for the award of doctoral degree. Faculty members and students attended his public defense.

Sohail Noor completed his research under the supervision of Professor Dr. Sardar Khan, (T.I. PAS fellow) Former vice chancellor, Kohat university of



Science & Technology, and examiners were included Dr. Alia Naz, Associate Professor Department of Environmental Sciences, University of Haripur, and Dr. Zahir Muhammad, Associate Professor Botany Department, University of Peshawar. He was also granted a patent by the Intellectual Property Organization (IPO-Pakistan) for the innovation of his study findings.

## Power suspension for various grids notified

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) on Friday informed that due to maintenance work power supply will remain suspended from Hattar grid station on 4th February from 9 a.m.to 5 p.m.

Consequently, it said consumers of Centronics, Baffa, SAC, Solve Tech,

Murree Glass, Mujahid Steel, Steel 2, Hattar 4, ECO Pack, Adeel Shahbaz, Nova Synpac, Hattar 7, National Steel and Auxiliary feeders will face inconvenience.

Likewise, it power supply will remain suspended from Daggar Grid Station on 6th February from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. resultant consumers of Karakoram, Gokand, Salarzai, Irrigation Scheme, Chagarzai, Sur Qila feeders will face inconvenience. The power supply will also remain suspended from Mansehra Grid Station on 6th February from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. resultant, consumers of Ghazikot, Chana, Qalandar Abad, Lasin Nawab, Muradpur, Khaki and Shankari feeders will face inconvenience.



PESHAWAR: A shopkeeper frying fish at Ghanta Gher Bazaar.

### Control room for election 2024 setup at CM Sectt

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: An Emergency Control Room has been established at Chief Minister's Secretariat Peshawar for peaceful holding of the upcoming General Elections 2024.

The Emergency Control Room will be functional from 7th to 9th February 2024. It will coordinate all kind of activities/information and emergencies with relevant stakeholders; and bring the information into the notice of Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa till the finalization of the General Elections.

According to a notification issued from the Chief Minister's Secretariat to this effect, Deputy Secretary of the Secretariat Mohsin Iqbal has been nominated as Focal Person/In-charge of the Emergency Control Room. The Emergency Control Room can be accessed on the UAN No.091-111-712-713, Fax No. 091-9210707 and Whatsapp No. 0343-2222949.

### PPP to overcome high inflation

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) victory is written on the wall which will be rise on February 8. People's Party's candidates will be successful on 13 provincial and 5 seats of the National Assembly of Peshawar.

This was claimed by PPP provincial information secretary and advisor to the former federal minister, while talking at the Constitution Forum and said that the People's Party will give surprising results in the elections. He added that serving the people is our motto.

People's Trade Forum has started an election campaign for success. Abidullah Yousafzai, Syed Zahir Ali Shah, Ziaullah Afridi, Malik Tehmash Khan, Jameel Daudzai, Umar Khattab, Dawood Barki, Arab Alamgir, Arab Zarak, Malik Amjad, Karamatullah Chaghramti and Nawab Khattak will be successful. People's Party is a popular democratic and political party of millions of people. People's Party does politics for the people, they will provide 300 units of electricity and build two million houses.

People's Party is determined to solve important problems like inflation, unemployment and poverty. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has always talked about the four provinces, except for the People's Party, no party has even presented its manifesto to the people. are with and want to see Bilawal Bhutto Zardari as Prime Minister, the night of February 8 will prove to be the day of Ladley's (Maryam Nawaz) mourning.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the martyr of democracy, has taken into consideration the welfare of the people in the party manifesto, till date no party except PPP has been able to present its manifesto. People's Party has always thought of the people and parties other than PP are only greedy for power. We have always supported the poor worker.

### Consultative session held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commission on Status of Women (KPCSW) here Friday organized a consultative session for involvement of civil society and stakeholders to protect rights of women in elections.

Addressing the session, Deputy Director Election Commission, Suhail Ahmad informed the participants about efforts being made to provide same environment to female voters in electoral process. Khateeb Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Mufti Tayab Qureshi said that Islam has given equal rights to women and said that they should be facilitated and granted permission to enjoy their rights.

Secretary KPCSW, Rabin Haider Bukhari said that mandate of the commission include participation of women in elections.

## IIOJK and Gaza urgently seek int'l support: Kakakhel

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Barrister Feroz Jamal Shah Kakakhel, the caretaker minister for Information and Public Relations, Culture and Tourism Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Friday inaugurated a photo exhibition at Nishtar Hall Peshawar, commemorating Kashmir Solidarity Day.

The exhibition was organized by the Culture and Tourism Authority to highlight the plight of the oppressed people in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). Addressing the gathering, the Minister Feroz Jamal Shah Kakakhel underscored the resilience of the brave sons and daughters of Kashmir against India's oppression and domination. He paid homage to the martyrs of the Kashmir cause and those who valiantly resisted Indian atrocities. The caretaker minister asserted that India's attempts to suppress the spirit of freedom among

Kashmiris have consistently failed and will continue to do so.

Highlighting the importance of a just resolution to the Jammu and Kashmir conflict, Minister Information emphasized the need for adherence to United Nations Security Council resolutions according to the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. He called upon the international community, especially Islamic countries to ask India to withdraw unilateral actions in Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir and implement UN Security Council resolutions for a peaceful resolution of the issue.

Expressing unwavering solidarity, the caretaker minister conveyed the message that the government and people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa stand firmly with the Kashmiris in their quest for self-determination. He assured full political, moral, and diplomatic support for their just struggle.

In a broader context, the

caretaker minister addressed the atrocities on Muslims in Gaza, calling for the United Nations Security Council and Islamic countries to play a pivotal role in ensuring peace. He expressed full solidarity with the Palestinians against Israeli oppression and pledged ongoing support until a permanent solution is achieved.

The photo exhibition, walk, and other initiatives were aimed at raising awareness about the Kashmiri people's plight and underscore the importance of recognizing their right of self-determination. The event was attended by the government officials including DG Information Muhammad Imran, DG Tourism Barkatullah, civil society, media representatives, and the general public. The event also included a walk in support of Kashmiris, featuring raised slogans and banners displaying the flags of Azad Kashmir.

## Minister takes notice of outdated custom of 'Ghag'

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Newly Merged District Affairs, Industries, Commerce and Technical Education Dr. Aamer Abdullah has taken the notice of the complaints about the outdated custom of 'Ghag' in some tribal areas and directed the concerned authorities to take concrete steps for the eradication of this heinous crime.

In a dispatch issued by the office of the caretaker minister to the respective Divisional Commissioners, Regional Police Officers (RPOs), Deputy Commissioners (DCs) and District Police Officers of the merged districts and former Frontier

Regions (FRs) here on Friday, it has been stated that under 'Ghag Act' it has been declared a non-bailable and cognizable offense which under Section 4 of the Act, imprisonment for a term of 3 to 7 years with a fine of five lakh rupees or both.

The Caretaker Minister has directed that such matter should be dealt with only in accordance with the relevant legal provisions contained in the Ghag Act and that such persons who are guilty of violating the said Act shall be prosecuted under this Act. Further, the cases of such nature should be registered immediately.

The caretaker minister has further directed that such cases should be diligently followed up so that

the violators could be brought to the court of justice as soon as possible while appropriate measures should be taken to protect the victims. He said that no negligence should be committed in such matters and law-breaking elements should be dealt with iron hands.

It should be cleared that the issue of committing the crime of 'Ghag' will not be resolved by the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) means of Jirga. He said that even after the enforcement of the Act, complaints of the continuation of the custom are being registered. Taking immediate action on these complaints, the minister directed to take action against this crime only under the relevant law.



PESHAWAR: A man buying political flag from a shop at Qissa Khwani Bazaar for upcoming general elections.

## KMU organizes green seminar, plantation drive

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Medical University (KMU) in Peshawar recently played host to a highly successful Green Seminar and Plantation Drive organized by the Green Youth Movement (GYM) KMU. This impactful initiative is committed to empowering youth for sustainable development, with a primary focus on contributing to a greener Pakistan. Dr. Mujeeb Ur Rehman, the Focal Person for GYM, played a pivotal role as the chief organizer of the event.

The seminar witnessed active participation from distinguished figures, including Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Zia Ul Haq, Director Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences Dr. Sami Siraj, Director of Sports KMU Mr. Nasir Saleem Arab, and Chief Proctor Associate Professor Dr. Haji Bahadar, alongside faculty members and a large number of students.

In his address, VC KMU Prof Dr. Zia Ul Haq emphasized the crucial role of youth in sustain-

able development and green growth. He stressed the need to sensitize and organize youth for environmental protection and eco-friendly behavior, advocating for tangible investments in the demographic growth of Pakistani youth. Prof Dr. Zia Ul Haq also highlighted the importance of promoting research and environmental innovation to effectively address climate adaptation, mitigation, and environmental protection. The initiative aims to mentor and promote young environmental innovators at both regional and international levels.

Dr. Mujeeb Ur Rehman, Chief Organizer of the Seminar and Focal Person of GYM, emphasized the alignment of the Green Youth Movement with the Prime Minister's Youth Program, seeking to leverage global eco-innovations. Drawing inspiration from successful global models in agriculture, forestry, waste management, water conservation, and renewable energy, the initiative incorporates proven solutions. Dr. Rehman under-

scored the initiative's specific focus on ecotourism, advocating for responsible travel practices, community involvement, and biodiversity conservation as integral components of sustainable tourism.

The seminar extended gratitude for the significant contributions of Dr. Mujeeb Ur Rehman, the Focal Person of GYM, and Chief Proctor Associate Prof Dr. Haji Bahadar. Their dedicated efforts were recognized for aligning and fostering a collaborative approach towards environmental conservation and sustainable practices.

This refined approach signifies a firm commitment to nurturing a generation of environmentally conscious leaders. The Green Youth Movement aspires to create a lasting impact, not only within Pakistan but also on the global stage. By integrating local initiatives with global best practices, the movement aims to make a substantial contribution to broader goals of sustainable development and environmental conservation.





## In brief

### 25 injured as coach overturns

KOTRI (INP): At least 25 people including women and children were injured when a passenger coach overturned M-9 Motorway here on Friday, rescue sources said. According to details, a Multan bound passenger coach coming from Karachi turned turtle while overtaking near Attock petrol pump in Nooriabad area of Jamshoro. As a result of accident, women and children among 25 people sustained injuries. The injured were shifted to Nooriabad Trauma Centre where three passengers with critical wounds were shifted to Civil Hospital Hyderabad through Edhi ambulance.

### 72 liquor bottles recovered

SIALKOT (INP): Police arrested a suspect with 72 bottles of liquor during special checking in the area of Kotli-Loharan here on Friday. According to Kotli-Loharan police, the team during patrolling intercepted a car and recovered 72 bottles of liquor from the possession of the accused driver Adeel. Police sent the accused behind the bars after registering a case.

### Three killed, several injured

KHUZDAR (INP): At least three people were killed while several others including women were injured in collision between passenger coach and a car here on Friday. According to details, an over speeding passenger coach hit a private car on National Highway in Saman area of Khuzdar. As a result of accident, three people were killed on the spot while women among several others sustained injuries. The bodies and injured were shifted to Trauma Centre Khuzdar. Condition of some more wounded people was stated to be critical and it was feared that death toll could rise further.

### Couple critically injured

BAHAWALPUR (INP): Two including husband and wife were critically injured after they openly attacked each other with knives here on Friday. According to details, after exchange of hot words, husband and wife attacked each other with sharp edged tools at Gate No. 1 of Bahawalpur bus stand. The couple was critically injured in the incident. Rescue team reached the scene and shifted the injured couple to hospital. The police after registering a case into the incident started an investigation.

### Kidnappers kill youth

GUJRANWALA (INP): Kidnappers killed an abducted youth over nonpayment of ransom of five million rupees. According to details, a gang of kidnappers including women had kidnapped a 21-year-old Zeeshan, a resident of Nowshera Virkan few days earlier. The abductors had demanded Rs 5 million for release of the youth and over nonpayment of ransom killed the kidnapped youth, threw his body in Pipliwalla area of Tattle Aali in Gujranwala and fled the scene. The police took the body into custody and shifted it to hospital for postmortem. The police said that a case was already registered into the incident and efforts were underway to arrest the accused of murder of abducted youth.

### Couple killed

BHALWAL (INP): In an unfortunate incident, a husband and wife were killed when their speeding car hit a pole near Bhalwal on the highway.

# Start-of-art bus stand inaugurated in Mardan



## F.P. Report

MARDAN: Commissioner Mardan Division Shaukat Ali Yousafzai inaugurated the modern bus terminal at Chamtar Mardan in a grand ceremony held here on Friday. Covering an area of 734 kanals, this spacious bus terminal provides modern facilities to transporters and passengers.

On this occasion, Additional Commissioner Naeem Akhtar, Deputy Commissioner Mardan Mohammad Fayaz Khan Sherpao, DPO Mardan Najibur Rehman Bagwi, Secretary Regional Transport Authority Wajid Khan, SE Communications and Works Imran Khan, Executive Engineer Naqibullah Khattak, Additional Assistant Commissioner and Focal Person Junaid Khalid, Chamber of Commerce President Zahir Shah and Rescue 1122 officer Imran Khan, prominent transporters Khalil Khan, Imran, Haji Akbar Ali, Haji Nasir and a large number of transporters, transport workers and local elders were also present.

On reaching the bus terminal, transporters, local people and elders gave a warm welcome to the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner. A team of Rescue 1122 presented salute to Commissioner Mardan. SE Communications and Works Imran Khan while giving a briefing said that the new bus terminal has been completed at a cost of 23.8 million rupees, which includes parking area for 20 large vehicles, 20 ticketing offices, spacious waiting areas for women and men, male and female latrines, driver's quarters, dining halls and two washing areas have been constructed.

Speaking at the event, Commissioner Mardan Division Shaukat Ali Yousafzai said that in order to reduce the increasing traffic pressure on Mardan city and provide better services to the passengers, 734 kanal wide land in Chamtar has been allocated for the new bus terminal.

A beautiful building was constructed by spending a big amount of money. He said that all the necessary facilities will be provided to the transporters moving to the new bus terminal. He said that the administration is the service of the people, all necessary steps will be taken to maintain the betterment of the people and writ of the state and government would prevail at all cost.

Commissioner said that the shifting of transport Addas from the city has been done in pure public interest and the administration and police have no personal interest in it. He directed Deputy Commissioner Mardan and TMA staff to solve the problems of transporters, mechanics and traders who are shifting in

the new bus terminal on priority basis.

**Interesting contest expected on provincial seats:** In Mardan, there is a possibility of interesting contests on the three urban seats of the provincial assembly PK 57 which is a constituency consisting of urban areas of Gali Bagh, Bari Cham, Hoti, Sheikh Maltoon and some rural areas, the total number of voters in this constituency is one lakh 84 thousand 364 and there are a total of 13 candidates competing against each other.

The main contest in this constituency is expected between JUI's Maulana Amanat Shah Haqqani, ANP Ahmed Khan PTI-backed candidate Zahir Shah Toru and PPP Umar Farooq Khan Hoti. In the 2013 elections, PTI's Zahid Durrani won from here. In 2018, PTI's Zahir Shah Toru won this seat by getting 27 thousand votes.

ANP's Ali Khan came second with 21 thousand votes. In the constituency, Zahir Shah Toru is once again contesting on behalf of his party but ANP has changed its candidate and fielded former MPA Ahmad Khan. The second seat is PK58 consisting Muslimabad, Bijli Gar, Bicket Guj Cantt and City area. In 2008, 2013 and 2018 ANP Amir Haider Khan Hoti has been successful from here. He became the Chief Minister in 2008 and after that he vacated the seat after winning 2 elections.

Ahmad Khan Bahadur won from here in 2013 by-election but in 2018 by-election, Abdul Salam of PTI defeated him. The number of registered voters in this constituency is 2 lakh 17 thousand 529. Total 9 candidates will compete in this seat. Along with Haider Khan Hoti and Abdul Salam, JUI former MPA Maulana Tajul Amin Jabal, Mushtaq Seemab and (PTIP) Zulfikar Khan are in the fray.

It is generally believed that Awami National Party's Haider Khan Hoti position in this constituency is stable and popularly accepted. His competition is expected with JUI former MPA Maulana Tajul Amin Jabal. The third constituency, PK59, is a mostly rural constituency, which includes the areas of Gujar Garhi, Mangah, Jamal Garhi, Fatima, Babini and Saroshah. The number of votes in this constituency is 1 lakh 78 thousand 684, 17 candidates are in the fray for this seat.

In the past, former Provincial Minister Atif Khan has been successful from this constituency, but this time his close associate Tariq Aryan is in the election race as an independent. ANP has fielded its District General Secretary Haroon Khan for this constituency, JUI has fielded Maulana Aqeel Ansari and former Tehsil Nazim Ibrahim Buland on behalf of Jamaat-e-Islami and (PTIP) has nominated Arifullah on his behalf.

# PPP former women wing president joins JUI-F

## F.P. Report

MARDAN: Former Divisional President of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Women's Wing, former Tehsil Councilor Aqeela Sambal has joined Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazal (JUI-F) along with hundreds of women. Provincial President of JUI Women's Wing and former MNA Naema Kishwar made Aqeela Sambal wear party muffler.

Former Tehsil Councilor Aqeela Sambal held a press conference along with former MNA and JUI Women's Wing Provincial President Naema Kishwar at Mardan Press Club here on Thursday. He said that PPP was a family party, but no one was interested in solving women's problems there. A few people were occupying the women's wing.

Therefore, it became impossible for me to solve women's problems there. That is why I left PPP and joined Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam without any greed. My only aim is that the women here get legitimate rights and a legitimate position and their problems can be solved respectfully at the doorstep of their homes. Provincial leader of JUI MCCI President Zahir Shah convinced. Aqeela Sambal said that now the consciousness among women has awakened, no one can be deceived by mere claims.

Provincial President of Women's Wing and former MNA Naema Kishwar while congratulating Aqeela Sambal on joining the party said that she will

not be disappointed with the hope she has joined. JUI is struggling for the elevation of Islam and implementation of Islam in the country. The next government will be of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam. Only the JUI government can give women their rightful rights.

On this occasion, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam district general secretary and candidate PK-57 Maulana Amanat Shah Haqqani, candidate of PK-58 Maulana Taj-ul-Amin Jabal, NA-22 candidate Qari Niaz Ali Haqqani and Maulana Asrar-ul-Haq were also present.

**Election code violations:** In a crackdown led by District Monitoring Officer Additional Commissioner Mardan, Naeem Akhtar, 19 candidates from various political parties have been served notices for violations of the Election Code of Conduct and the Election Act 2017. The Monitoring Officer's office revealed that during this period, 12 candidates received warnings, while heavier penalties were imposed on six candidates.

According to the data provided by the office, a total of Rs. 100,000 in fines were imposed collectively on the six candidates. Notably, PTI parliamentary candidate Zulfikar Khan faced a Rs. 25,000 penalty, Jamiat-e-Islami candidate Nauman Yousuf received a Rs. 5,000 fine, PML-N candidate Jamshed Khan faced a Rs. 10,000 penalty, Awami National Party's Gohar Ali Shah received a Rs. 10,000 fine, ANP candidate Ahmad Khan Bahadur faced a Rs. 10,000 penalty, and JI candidate

Aqib Ismail faced a hefty Rs. 50,000 fine.

Expressing concern over the violations, Naeem Akhtar emphasized that strict action would be taken against candidates and political parties to ensure peaceful and transparent elections. He urged compliance with Election Act and Code of Conduct, promising legal actions for those found violating these regulations. The District Monitoring Officer is determined to uphold the integrity of the electoral process and maintain a fair and secure environment for upcoming elections.

## Two new depts setup at Asifa Dental College

## F.P. Report

LARKANA: At least, two more departments have been established in the Bibi Asifa Bhutto Dental College Larkana established by the Sindh government, on Friday.

Vice Chancellor Benazir Bhutto Medical University Prof. Dr. Nusrat Shah, speaking on the occasion, said that a dentist is actually an artist who makes smiles more beautiful. He added that the world BDS is more important than MBBS.

On this occasion Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Nusrat Shah announced to give two portable x-rays, Prof. Dr. Salim Raza Khuhawer and others informed about the needs of the established departments.

# Rescue 1122 aids 452 citizens

## F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Rescue 1122 Lower Dir responded to a total of 493 emergencies in the district and provided timely services to 452 citizens during the month of January.

According to District Emergency Officer Abrar Ali, while issuing the performance report for the last month, the Rescue 1122 control room received 4912 calls in which 493 were related to emergency, 198 medical emergencies, 30 road traffic accidents, 38 fire incidents, 01 fight and shooting incident and 20 other miscellaneous emergencies.

Rescue 1122 provided its services in a timely manner, some patients were shifted to nearby hospitals after providing first aid on the spot and 206 patients referred by doctors under the ambulance referral service were shifted to different hospitals within the district and the province under the supervision of the trained staff. Local residents lauded the valuable services and hoped the Rescue 1122 would continue serving the masses in future too.

# Mian Iftikhar blasts PTI-P

## F.P. Report

PABBI: Awami National Party (ANP) central general secretary and candidate for provincial assembly candidate Mian Iftikhar Husain said that we had made records from 2008 to 2013 both constitutionally and development of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

ANP kicks off development projects Despite the bed security situation we security and financial crises faced by Pakistan especially Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The political workers from different parties including PTI, and JUI announced their support for ANP's NA 34 Mian Babar Shah Kaka Khel. Moreover, tehsil Pabbi president Haji Zar Ali along with Abbas Ghazi, and Qadar Zahid were also present.

ANP general secretary said that previous parliamentarians belong to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf become billionaire by malpractices during last nine rule over Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

# Sujawal a hard nut for PPP to crack

## F.P. Report

SUJAWAL: Sujawal the district located along the coastline of the Arabian Sea was given the status of a separate revenue district in 2013 after carving it out from historically rich district Thatta. The district comprises one national assembly and two provincial assembly seats.

The Pakistan People's Party in order to maintain its political dominance in the coastal region of the province has given preference to the Shirazi family over its stalwart leaders who stood by the party during hard times. In the past the highly influential Shirazi family had made things strenuous for PPP especially during the general elections of 2002, 2008 and 2013 in Thatta and Sujawal districts.

During 2008 general elections when Sujawal was part of Thatta district and the areas of Sujawal comprising one national assembly and two provincial assembly seats PPP failed to secure even a single seat despite holding sincere public sympathy following assassination of Benazir Bhutto. The general elections of 2013 also could not change things for PPP in Sujawal district and all its candidates were defeated by Shirazis and their ally Muhammad Ali Malkani.

Finding no other way PPP joined hands with both Shirazi and Malkani clans for general elections of 2018 and that coalition still continues despite glitches on several occasions. As many as 35 candidates are gearing up for three seats of the district in the upcoming elections.

# Laptops distributed among WSSC interneers

## F.P. Report

KOHAT: Provincial Caretaker Minister for Finance, Ahmad Rasool Bangashhere Friday distributed laptops among fresh graduates that are appointed for internships in various departments of Water and Sanitation Services Company (WSSC) Kohat.

The laptops were distributed under Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Citizens Improvement Project (KPCIP). Chief Executive WSSC, Arif Rauf, Advisor, Waqas Paracha and other concerned officials were also present on the occasion.

It is worth mentioning that 'Fresh Graduates Internship Program' has been launched in Kohat with the cooperation of Asian Development Bank Kohat under KPCIP. Later, caretaker minister visited Service Delivery Centre and Tehsil Office Kohat and directed further facilitation of people besides steps to increase revenue.

He also met with people and listened to their problems.

**Six POs among 18 arrested search operation:** The police of Lachi tehsil during a search and strike operation on Friday detained 18 suspects including 6 wanted proclaimed offenders (POs).

Spokesman for Kohat police said during the operation, 1 Kalashnikov, 5 guns, 1 rifle, 2 pistols and dozens of cartridges were recovered from the detained persons. Facilitators of wanted proclaimed offenders were also among the detainees.

The spokesman said raids were conducted on the possible hideouts of the criminals, including the houses of the proclaimed offenders.

The intelligence-based operation was conducted under the headship of DSP Lachi, Yusuf Jan. SHO Lachi Jabar Khan and a heavy contingent of police, elite force and lady police participated in the operation. The arrested pro-

claimed offenders and suspects were shifted to Lachi police station for investigation.

**Resident requests CJP for recovery of son:** A resident of Tangi Banda and ex Station House Officer named Munawar Khan blamed both Kohat and Punjab police for illegal arrest of his son Anwar Ullah while didn't produced before court of law which is unconstitutional as well as criminal offense.

This he said while addressing a press conference at Kohat press club and claimed that my son Anwar Ullah was arrested by Punjab police along with Kohat police without the permission of home department. He blamed Punjab police for not presenting their son to the court from one and half month.

The speaker claimed that Superintendent of Police (SP) Pindi had portrayed Anwar Ullah as proclaimed offender in public notice and requested Chief Justice of Pakistan for recovery of his son.

# PPP claims sweep in all Dir constituencies on 8th

## F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Pakistan Peoples Party divisional president and former minister of state Malik Azmat Khan has said that provision of natural gas to the Lower Dir district is the credit of his party for which he had deposited Rs 510 million from his fund when he was an MNA. He stated this while addressing a workers' convention at Danwa area here on Friday. The gathering was also addressed by former provincial minister Mahmood Zeb Khan, PPP candidate for NA 7 Alam Zeb advocate, PK 16 candidate Kamran Zeb Khan, former district bar president Jehan Bahadar advocate, Malik Tariq Wahab and others.

The speakers claimed the PPP would form the next government at the center and in the province with the support of independent candidates. They said that it was the PPP that gave the province its new name the 'Khyber Pakhtunkhwa'. The former state minister Malik Azmat said the PPP had fielded active candidates in all constituencies of the Lower Dir and it would sweep the Feb 8 elections. He said the PPP only could solve problems faced by the poor masses as no other political party worked for the poor and oppressed.

Speaking on the occasion Mahmood Zeb said that he had approved 58 schools including 12 higher secondary schools and one college of commerce in the district during his tenure as provincial minister for technical education. He said the PPP had done a record number of development projects in Dir while the PTI lawmakers had failed to initiate a single development project during the last five years. He said the Timergara Medical College would be made functional if people voted for the PPP. He asked the people of Dir to vote for his party if they wished for the development and prosperity of the area.

Meanwhile, scores of political workers announced to join the PPP during a function held at Sarai Payeen Talash which was addressed by former senator Ahmad Hassan Khan, former provincial minister Mahmood Zeb Khan, PPP candidate for NA 7 Alam Zeb, Fazal Wahab Swati and others. The speakers said the party leadership and workers had rendered great sacrifices for democracy in Pakistan. They said the PPP workers were united under the leadership of Bilawal Bhutto and Asif Ali Zardari.

**PTI-P claim:** Former provincial minister for finance and the Pakistan Tahreek Insaf Parliamentarian (PTI-P) These views were expressed by the former provincial minister and provincial leader of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Parliamentarian, Ms. Asia Jahangir, while addressing the ceremony given in honor of the party candidates for the four provincial and national assembly seat of Bannu at her residence. National Assembly Pir Syed Qaiser Abbas Shah, Candidate PK 99 Malik Halimzada Wazir, Candidate PK 101 Syed Fida Ahmad Shah, Candidate PK 102 Syed Jafar Shah Irfan Pirzada Advocate, Pir Ahmad Shah, Malik Amirzada Khan Wazir and other leaders were present.

On the occasion, various known families of Bannu resigned from other parties and announced to join them.

# Admn, ECP finalize arrangements for elections

MULTAN (INP): District administration and Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Multan through joint efforts have finalized all arrangements to hold Feb 8 polls in a free, fair and transparent manner and government officers and officials who were absent from election training sessions have returned and undergoing training.

Deputy Commissioner and District Returning Officer Captain (retired) Rizwan Qadeer stated this

while addressing a meeting of Returning Officers (ROs) at his office in Multan Friday. The DRO said that a central election office has been set up inside Multan Public School where all Returning Officers would be available with proper office set up and receive results from Presiding Officers there.

He said that the officers/officials who were reported absent from election training have been brought back to duty and undergoing

election training. He said that all officers and officials assigned election duty would not be allowed to avail leave, leave the station or travel to foreign countries.

Rizwan Qadeer said that the process of transportation of polling material to polling stations and security arrangements there was in progress and the administration enjoyed the support and full cooperation of police, law enforcement agencies and Pakistan Armed Forces in this regard.





## Election officials in South Africa rush to register 100,000 prisoners to vote

PRETORIA (AP): South African election officials have visited prisons across the country as part of an ambitious project to register at least 100,000 inmates to vote in this year's national election. The country's constitution guarantees every adult citizen the right to vote - meaning there are no restrictions on prisoners taking part in elections, a stark contrast to most other African nations. The date for the vote has not yet been announced, but it's expected to be held between May and August.

The Electoral Commission of South Africa hopes to register a record number of inmates in the 240 correctional facilities across the country as voters. Around 15,000 prisoners voted in the last national election in 2019. South Africa has about 157,000 inmates currently in prison, according to authorities. The country struggles with one of the highest crime rates in the world. The commission said that though it was concluding its visit to all 240 prisons, it still could not say how many prisoners countrywide had registered.

At the all-male Zonderwater Correctional Centre on the outskirts of the capital, Pretoria, prisoners in orange uniforms lined up in a hall to register as first-time voters or update their details on electoral rolls if they have been recently incarcerated. Guards kept a close watch. A banner with the words "Ensuring Free and Fair Elections" was pinned to a prison wall. Other inmates ignored the process, chatting to each other or getting on with their work preparing



lunch in the cafeteria. "The whole country is a single constituency," said electoral commission chairperson Mosotho Moepya. "Whether they are here at Zonderwater ... or elsewhere in the country." Khathutshelo Mashau, an inmate who registered, said he thinks that prisoners also have an interest in who governs the country.

"The way our courts are operating sometimes, it does frustrate us," Mashau said. "If you are writing an appeal it takes so long. That's one thing that us, as offenders, we are worried about." Mandla Mpangane also registered to vote but said most prisoners did not, largely because they are disillusioned with the way the legal process handles their parole applications and grievances while in

prison. He said he hoped his vote would improve the running of the prison and life for his family on the outside. "It will make a big difference in our community," he said. South Africa, with a population of 62 million, has more than 27 million registered voters so far for this year's national election. It will be South Africa's seventh under its new democracy.

The country's first all-race vote was held in 1994 and saw Nelson Mandela elected as the country's first Black president to officially end the apartheid system of forced racial segregation. The African National Congress party once led by Mandela has been in government ever since apartheid ended.

## French farmers call to end protests

PARIS: France's leading farming unions have called to end nationwide road-blocks over pay, tax and regulation after securing promises of government assistance. French farmers have blocked roads around the country for two weeks in protests that spread across Europe last week.

The farmers were protesting against low earnings, regulation and what they call unfair competition from abroad. Arnaud Rousseau, chief of the biggest rural union FNSEA, and Young Farmers (JA) President Arnaud Gaillot held a news conference to announce the suspension of the action. The announcement followed promises of cash, eased regulations and protection against unfair competition by Prime Minister Gabriel Attal, the government's second wave of concessions in a week.

Gabriel Attal's speech came as convoys with hundreds of farmers created chaos outside the European Union's headquarters, demanding leaders at an EU summit provide relief from rising prices and bureaucracy. "The question is currently being asked throughout Europe: Is there a future for our agriculture?" Of course, the answer is yes," Attal said. Attal announced that France was banning, starting immediately, imports of fruits and vegetables coming from outside the EU that have been treated with Thioclopride - an insecticide currently banned in the bloc. He also said no pesticides would be banned in France that are authorised elsewhere in the EU. The statement was in response to a demand by French farmers who have denounced stricter regulations in France on pesticide products than in neighbouring countries. France will propose the creation of a "European control force" to combat fraud, he said, particularly regarding health regulations, and fight against the import of food products that do follow European and French health standards. Attal also reaffirmed that France would remain opposed to the EU signing a free-trade deal with the Mercosur trade group. "There is no question of France accepting this treaty," he said. The government's goals with the newly announced measures are "to give food its value back" and "to boost farmers' income, to protect them against unfair competition and to simplify their daily life", he said. Attal also announced 150 million euros (\$162m) in aid to livestock farmers and a decrease in taxes on farms being transferred from older generations to younger ones.

Agriculture Minister Marc Fesneau, speaking after Attal, announced a two-billion-euro (\$2.16bn) package to fund loans for those who are setting up as farmers. The French government has said it will fine food industrial groups and supermarkets that do not comply with a 2018 law meant to pay a fair price to farmers. The fine can reach up to 2 percent of sales revenues to companies that do not comply. — Aljazeera

UK MP says he's quitting Parliament

LONDON (AP): A Conservative lawmaker in Britain said he will step down when an election is called later this year because of abuse and death threats he says are linked to his support for Israel. Mike Freer said an arson attack on his office in December was the "final straw."

He told the BBC that when people go into politics, "we kind of sign up for it, we take it on the chin. ... But it's not fair on our families." Freer represents the London constituency of Finchley and Golders Green, which has a large Jewish population. Freer said he had received death threats from a group called Muslims Against Crusades and began wearing a stab-proof vest after learning his office had been staked out by Ali Harbi Ali, an Islamic State group supporter who stabbed Conservative lawmaker David Amess to death in 2021. Amess was the second British lawmaker murdered in the past decade.

## US imposes sanctions on four Israeli settlers over West Bank violence

WASHINGTON: The United States has imposed sanctions on several Israeli settlers for attacking Palestinian communities in the occupied West Bank, accusing them of undermining stability and security in Israel and the Palestinian territories.

The announcement comes amid increasing pressure on President Joe Biden over his unwavering support for Israel's war on Gaza as he campaigns for re-election in November. The sanctions target David Chai Chasday, Einar Tanjil and Yonon Levi, who are accused of assaulting and intimidating Palestinians. They also target Shalom Zickerman, who is accused of assaulting Israeli activists.

The sanctions will freeze the individuals' assets in the US and restrict financial dealings with them. Earlier, Axios reported that the Biden administration had considered sanctioning ultranationalist government ministers Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich, but decided against the move. "There are no plans to target with sanctions Israeli government officials at this time," White House national security spokesperson John Kirby told reporters, adding that the US informed the Israeli government before announcing the sanctions. The White House also announced a new decree to penalise perpetrators of "extremist settler violence" in the West Bank. US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said in a statement that settler violence "poses a grave threat to peace, security, and stability in the West Bank, Israel, and the Middle East region, and threatens the national security and foreign policy interests of the United States".

The executive order coincides with Biden's visit to Michigan, a Midwestern swing state that is home to a large Arab American community. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appeared to reject the US move, saying that the overwhelming majority of West Bank settlers are "law-abiding citizens". "Israel acts against all Israelis who break the law, everywhere; therefore, exceptional measures are unnecessary," his office said in a statement. Reporting from Ramallah in the occupied West Bank, Al Jazeera's Charles Stratford cited Palestinians as saying that Israeli authorities do not hold settlers accountable for attacks. "In many, many incidents, we see settlers acting with either the tacit support or the actual physical support of the Israeli military in these attacks," Stratford said. The announcement comes as the Biden administration continues to work to secure \$14bn in additional aid to the Israeli government, whose forces often accompany and protect settlers during their attacks on Palestinians. Israeli authorities rarely prosecute suspects in violence against Palestinians. Last month, Israeli settlers and an off-duty police officer fatally shot 17-year-old Palestinian American Tawfiq Ajaja in the West Bank, according to his family.

The Biden administration has called for an investigation into the case, but Israeli

authorities have not made any arrests in the killing of the US teenager. Raids by Israeli settlers and soldiers against West Bank towns and villages have increased since the outbreak of the war on Gaza on October 7, killing hundreds of Palestinians. "This [executive order] will allow the United States to issue financial sanctions against those directing or participating in certain actions, including acts or threats of violence against civilians, intimidating civilians to cause them to leave their homes, destroying or seizing property, or engaging in terrorist activity in the West Bank," Sullivan said. In the same statement, the US national security adviser emphasised Washington's support for what he called "Israel's right to defend itself". Despite growing calls for a ceasefire globally, and mounting evidence of Israeli abuses, the Biden administration has pushed on with its support for the war on Gaza, arguing that Hamas must be eliminated. Washington says it has been in discussions with Israel to minimise civilian casualties and allow more aid into Gaza. But Biden has so far resisted calls to use his administration's assistance to Israel as leverage to pressure the US ally to end rights violations against Palestinians.

Israeli leaders - including Netanyahu - have been openly defying the Biden administration in their vocal rejection of the establishment of a Palestinian state. "Good that Biden will impose targeted sanctions on Israeli settlers who attack Palestinians," human rights advocate Kenneth Roth wrote in a social media post. "Now how about conditioning [or stopping] military aid and arms sales to Israel until it stops bombing and besieging Palestinian civilians in Gaza." The Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), an advocacy group, also played down the significance of the sanctions, saying that Biden should penalise Israeli officials responsible for settler violence and end US support for the war on Gaza. "It makes no sense for the Biden administration to oppose killing Palestinian civilians in the West Bank while enabling the killing of Palestinian civilians in Gaza," CAIR said in a statement. For his part, Abed Ayoub, executive director at the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), called the sanctions "empty", saying that they are far from groundbreaking. Ayoub said the White House sees the sanctions as a "safe way" to appeal to some voters who are angry over Biden's backing for the war on Gaza. "That's the intent of all of this. That's why it was released today during Biden's trip to Michigan," Ayoub told Al Jazeera. He added that targeting a few individual settlers risks normalising the broader settlement movement and called for stricter measures to ensure accountability. "We know that many of these settlers are American. Open those settlers up the civil and criminal liability in the US," he said. — Aljazeera

## EU leaders isolated Orban to seal Ukraine aid deal

BRUSSELS (Reuters): To get Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban to end his block on a 50 billion euro (\$54.3 billion) aid package for Ukraine, other European Union leaders teamed up ahead of a crunch summit to deliver a stark message: You're on your own this time. The veteran Hungarian leader, who maintains close ties to Moscow despite its invasion of Ukraine, has been adept in the past at finding enough support among his peers to drive a hard bargain in EU negotiations.

But in the days and hours before special summit in Brussels, leaders - individually and in groups - told Orban that the other 26 members of the union were united behind the deal and he would face consequences if he continued to block, according to EU diplomats and officials. Similar messages came from German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, French President Emmanuel Macron and, importantly, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, an ideological ally of the populist Orban. "I worked on trying to bring us to a point where

we could not divide Europe at a time like this," Meloni told reporters.

Ahead of the summit, some diplomats and officials ramped up pressure by spelling out via anonymous briefings and leaks what consequences Hungary might face, such as damage to its economy and a freeze on Budapest's right to vote on EU decisions. Others expressed doubts over whether the EU would have gone that far. But the reports added to the sense that leaders were ready to play hardball with Orban. "We have been working for a week in a growing group of countries for a clear-cut position," Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk told reporters after the summit. "We are to be 27, the whole community, and nobody is going to pay anybody for it (a deal). There will be no rewards, and nobody will be looking for rotten compromises." That message was also conveyed at an eve-of-summit dinner, attended by most of the EU's leaders. "The tensions were tangible during dinner yesterday, the talks tough...Everyone was angry at him," said one

diplomat. "It reached boiling point," said another. Facing a united front, Orban was forced to abandon key demands - including an insistence that the four-year package should not be part of the EU's collective budget and that he should have an annual right to block it.

Orban also received no assurances that the EU would release funds frozen due to concerns about democratic standards and the rule of law in Hungary, diplomats said. Orban, however, claimed victory by declaring he had received assurances that none of the frozen money would go to Ukraine and that he had secured a "control mechanism" on the Ukrainian aid. But diplomats from multiple EU countries said that the regular reviews of that aid would not allow any single member to veto it. Officials also said there had never been any plan for frozen cash earmarked for Budapest to be reallocated to Ukraine. "He can now save face and say he won a veto right. But that has no teeth," a third diplomat said.

## Rohingya are fleeing Myanmar and Bangladesh by boat

SYDNEY (AP): Across a treacherous stretch of water, the Rohingya came by the thousands, then died by the hundreds. And though they know the dangers of fleeing by boat, many among this persecuted people say they will not stop - because the world has left them with no other choice.

Last year, nearly 4,500 Rohingya - two-thirds of them women and children - fled their homeland of Myanmar and the refugee camps in neighboring Bangladesh by boat, the United Nations' refugee agency reported. Of those, 569 died or went missing while crossing the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea, the highest death toll since 2014. The numbers mean one out of every eight Rohingya who attempted the crossing never made it, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees said last week.

Yet despite the risks, there are no signs the Rohingya will stop. Indonesian officials said another boat carrying Rohingya refugees landed in the country's northern province of Aceh. Fishermen provided food and water to 131 Rohingya, mostly women and children, who had been on board, said Marzuki, the leader of the local tribal fishing community, who like many Indonesians goes by one name. Some passengers told officials they had been at sea for weeks and their boat's engine had broken down, leaving them adrift, said Lt. Col. Andi Susanto, commander of the navy base in Lhokseumawe. "Southeast Asian waters are one of the deadliest stretches in the world and a graveyard for many Rohingya who have lost their lives," says Babar Baloch, UNHCR's spokesperson for Asia and the Pacific. "The rate of Rohingya who are dying at sea without being rescued - that's really alarming and worrying." Inside the squalid refugee camps in Bangladesh, where more than 750,000 ethnic Rohingya Muslims fled in 2017 following sweeping attacks by Myanmar's military, the situation has grown increasingly desperate. Not even the threat of death at sea is enough to stop many from trying to traverse the region's waters in a bid to

reach Indonesia or Malaysia. "We need to choose the risky journey by boat because the international community has failed their responsibility," says Mohammed Ayub, who is saving up money for a spot on one of the rickety wooden fishing boats traffickers use to ferry passengers 1,800 kilometers (1,100 miles) from Bangladesh to Indonesia.

Global indifference toward the Rohingya crisis has left those languishing in the overcrowded camps with few alternatives to fleeing. Because Bangladesh bans the Rohingya from working, their survival is dependent upon food rations, which were slashed last year due to a drop in global donations. Returning safely to Myanmar is virtually impossible for the Rohingya, because the military that attacked them overthrew Myanmar's democratically elected government in 2021. And no country is offering the Rohingya any large-scale resettlement opportunities. Meanwhile, a surge in killings, kidnappings and arson attacks by militant groups in the camps has left residents fearing for their lives. And so, starving, scared and out of options, they continue to board the boats. Ayub has lived in a sweltering, cramped shelter for more than six years in a camp where security and sanitation are scarce, and hope even scarcer. There is no formal schooling for his children, no way for him to earn money, no prospects for returning to his homeland and no refuge for his family amid spiraling gang violence. "Of course I understand how dangerous the boat journey by sea is," Ayub says. "We could die during the journey by boat. But it depends on our fate. ... It's better to choose the dangerous way even if it's risky, because we are afraid to stay in the camps."

Two hundred of the people who died or went missing at sea last year were aboard one boat that left Bangladesh in November. Eyewitnesses on a nearby boat told The Associated Press that the missing vessel, which was crowded with babies, children and mothers, broke down and was taking on water before

it drifted off during a storm as its passengers screamed for help. It has not been seen since. It was one of several distressed boats that the region's coastal countries neglected to save, despite the United Nations refugee agency's requests for those countries to launch search and rescue missions. "When no action is taken, lives are lost," says UNHCR's Baloch. "If there is no hope restored in Rohingya lives either in Myanmar or in Bangladesh, there are no rescue attempts, (then) sadly we could see more desperate people dying in Southeast Asian seas under the watch of coastal authorities who could act to save lives." Six of Mohammed Taher's family members were aboard the boat that vanished in November, including his 15-year-old brother, Mohammed Amin, and two of Taher's nephews, ages 3 and 4. Their ultimate destination was Malaysia, a Muslim-majority country where many Rohingya seek relative safety. Taher and his parents now struggle to sleep or eat, and spend their days agonizing over what became of their loved ones. Taher's mother saw a fortune teller who said her relatives were still alive. Taher, meanwhile, dreamed that the boat made it to shore, where his relatives took refuge in a school and were able to bathe in warm water. But he remains unconvinced their journey ended so happily. And so he has vowed to tell everyone to stay off the boats, no matter how unbearable life on land has become. "I will never leave by boat on this difficult journey," Taher says. "All the people who reached their destination are saying that it's horrific traveling by boat."

Yet such warnings are often futile. Ayub is now preparing to sell his daughter's jewelry to help pay for his spot on a boat. While he is frightened by the stories of those who didn't make it, he is motivated by the stories of those who did. "Nobody would consider taking a risk by boat on a dangerous journey if they had better opportunities," he says. "Fortunately, some people did reach their destination and got a better life. I am staying positive that Allah will save us."

## EU unlocks aid for Ukraine as it fights off Russia

BRUSSELS: European Union leaders have overcome objections from Hungary to approve a 50 billion euro (\$54bn) plan to support Ukraine for the next four years. The unanimous decision came, as Ukraine continues its struggle to repel a full-scale Russian invasion that began nearly two years ago.

Lawmakers and experts hailed the deal as an important buttress for the continued stability of the war-torn Eastern European country, whose economy is heavily reliant on Western aid. "The EU showed commitment to the continuous support of Ukraine under difficult geopolitical and internal circumstances ... and despite alleged public impatience with this support," European Institute lecturer George Tzogopoulos told Al Jazeera.

The deal, known as the "Ukraine Facility", consists of 17 billion euros (\$18.5bn) in grants and 33 billion euros (\$35.8bn) in loans, designed to help Ukraine rebuild and recover from the war. The funding is also expected to help Ukraine make reforms on its path to eventual EU membership. EU leaders officially

invited Ukraine to become a member in December, but around the same time, Hungary vetoed the aid package, saying Ukraine funding should not be grafted onto the EU multi-annual budget. The aid's eventual passage was met with cheers from Ukrainian officials. Deputy Prime Minister Yuliya Svyrydenko wrote on Facebook that, with the funding, Ukraine had "come one step closer to economic stability for the next four years". Ukraine faces a \$43bn budget deficit this year and expects the EU aid will cover just under half of it.

EU leaders, meanwhile, hailed the aid package as a means of ensuring stability and democracy in Eastern Europe. "This locks in steadfast, long-term, predictable funding for Ukraine. EU is taking leadership & responsibility in support for Ukraine; we know what is at stake," European Council President Charles Michel wrote on the social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter. European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen likewise called it "a good day for Europe". Agreement also marked a moment of relative unity for EU members, some of whom, like the

Baltic states, are rearming against Russia. Others, like Italy, have been more wary of alienating Russia. "The EU stands behind you long-term, until victory," wrote Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas. "Ukraine's security is Europe's security," Italian prime minister Roberta Metsola echoed on social media. Leaders also agreed on an addition to the EU budget of two billion euros (\$2.17bn) for border security, 7.6 billion euros (\$8.26bn) for regional aid and 1.5 billion euros (\$1.6bn) for the European Defence Fund, an initiative to ensure cooperation among member countries' armed forces.

Key aspects of the Ukraine aid deal, however, remained murky. It was not clear if EU leaders had also approved a separate military aid fund for Ukraine worth 20 billion euros (\$21.7bn), proposed last July. Nor was it clear if they would move forward with the five billion euros (\$5.43bn) in military aid proposed by Josep Borrell, the EU's foreign policy chief. Questions also linger over what concessions were made to Hungary in order to lift its veto of the Ukraine funding package. — Aljazeera



The Frontier Post

Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

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

Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001

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

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

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

Local governments, and political dilemma

THE local bodies could not take root in Pakistan's political system, and diverse experiments of past rulers from President Ayub's Basic Democracy to General Zia's local body governments, from President Musharraf's devolution of powers to Municipalities to current day revision of the British era's Petwars and Tahsildar rule by the so-called feudal politics, all such endeavours stopped short of full filling public demands over the past seven and a half decades. Multiple efforts failed to bring the desired results largely due to the prejudice and impaired application of those systems by politicians and bureaucracy. At the time, no local government existed in any of the federating units and the Federal capital because no civic group from across the political spectrum intended to decentralize the power and devolve authority due to its vested political interests. Meanwhile, each political leader and party has its view and appreciation the 18th Amendment and Article 140-A of the Constitution. Henceforth, democratically elected public leaders obstruct the devolution of power to the grassroots level and resist the autonomy of the local bodies which is contrary to the essence of democracy and public service in the contemporary age.

As of now, local governments play a crucial role in addressing the fundamental needs of communities, fostering development, and ensuring efficient public 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, while a majority of public issues are resolved at the local level without any delay which brings utmost comfort to the common citizen. In the modern local government system, patwari, and police either come under the control of district governments or functions under the Justice Department that enhance efficiency and curb corruption in those departments. However, such a pro-public system does not suit political parties as it bars the administrative powers of the MNAs and the MPAs and allows them only their primary legislative role at the provincial and federal levels.

Historically, the local bodies' elections had always been a matter of concern for all political parties due to their malignant interests regarding the vote bank and political influence in their respective electoral Districts. The local bodies form a breeding ground for political groups and each party intends to instate its workers in lucrative positions so both party and leader improve their image through public work on public expenses. Awfully, no political party ever voiced in support of such a local government system that empowers the masses and fulfils their needs to the optimum level, rather feudal politics always upheld its communal interest and tried to slash the powers and curb funding to the local bodies. Although, the 18th Amendment and Article 140-A advocate for the devolution of authority and autonomy of the local bodies' governments to enhance public participation in decision-making processes and ensure transparency in government-affairs, yet civic groups and political leaders oppose stable local governments and fear risks to their authority.

Pakistan houses the world's fifth-largest population and has little semblance of local government with only four provinces representing over 240 million people. The successive governments made no sincere efforts for political decentralization, rationalisation of powers, and greater autonomy of grassroots-level democracy in the country. World nations are mulling conquering Mars and the Moon while Pakistani rulers are focused on subjugating the public to boost their politics. There is a genuine need for the devolution of power and strengthening of local bodies so the people can benefit from the true dividends of democracy in this country.

DRAP and drug mafia

CARETAKER Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar has directed to improve the performance of the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) and accelerate action against drug smugglers and hoarders. The premier ordered the authorities 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.

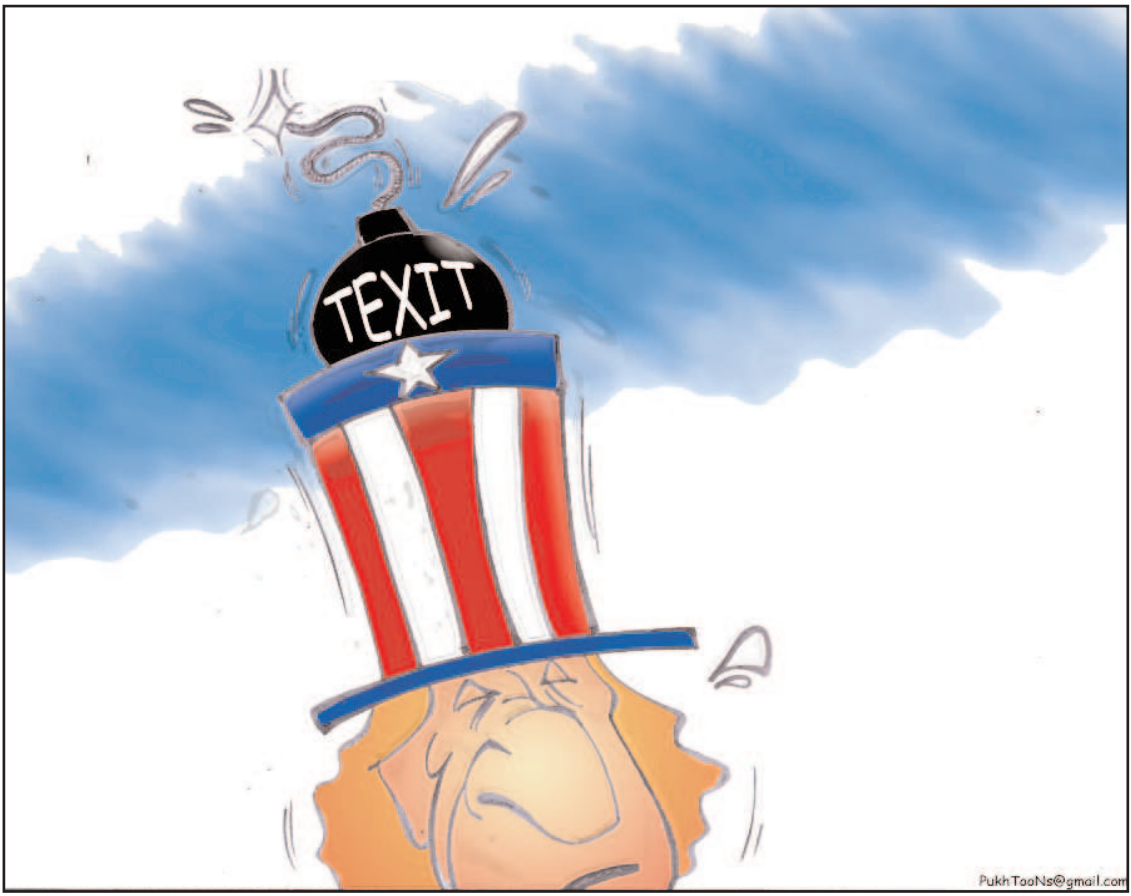
Like all other sectors of our national economy, the health sector, and pharmaceutical industry has been shaped into a worst cartel and an infamous mafia instead of a rockstar industry that can play a heroic role in national building and public service delivery through provision of standardized and low price medicines to the public. Substandard medicines, hoarding, smuggling, price hikes, black marketing of life saving drugs and non availability of essential medicines are the common problems of Pakistanis in all parts of the country. Meanwhile, drug prices are raised on regular intervals and have become out of reach of the middle class that forms over 42% of the country's population.

Historically, the Pakistan Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association, the representative body of nationwide drug manufacturers, used to put forth a long list of essential medicines before the government on regular intervals on the plea of rise in the prices of the raw material and get an increase of its own choice through market manipulation and blackmail of the governments. Interestingly, the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) always plays on behalf of drug manufacturers and paves the way for ultimate price hikes while any refusal/ delay from the government in accepting cartel demands led to a countrywide shortage and black marketing of essential medicines causes further suffering to the public. It has been a regular practice of the drug mafia that has not made healthcare expenses unbearable for the public but caused significant challenges for the government.

Apparently, the Drug Regulatory Authority has proved to be an ineffective body that failed in fulfilling its responsibility and protecting public interests. There is a need for public private partnership at the DRAP level wherein the committee composed of DRAP members, civil society and public leaders sit together and oversee the DRAP's affairs and regulate drug manufacturing at the national level, so the public feel some relief in the healthcare sector in the future.

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 tehsil of their residences at the bottom of their articles and letters.



Ethiopia's dangerous game in East Africa could spark conflict

Abdi Aynte

ON January 1, a controversial memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed between Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and President Muse Bihi Abdi of Somaliland, a break-away region of Somalia.

Purportedly, this agreement grants landlocked Ethiopia a 20km piece of coastal land for establishing a naval base and the right to build a commercial port. In return, Ethiopia said it intends to recognise Somaliland as an independent country, making it the first nation to do so. Ethiopian leaders have said that this move is aimed at correcting what they frame as a "historical mistake" of not having access to the sea. But Somalia holds no responsibility for this supposed historical injustice; Ethiopia lost its coastline after Eritrea gained its independence in 1993 following a three-decade-long war. Moreover, Ethiopia's claim that it needs access to the sea to grow its economy conveniently ignores the fact that its economy became the fastest growing in the continent after it became landlocked.

Now Addis Ababa's actions are threatening to spark yet another war in East Africa. Unless forces of reason prevail among Ethiopian leaders, the whole region could be dragged into conflict. By all accounts, this provocative move is rooted in the profound domestic crisis confronting the leaders of both Ethiopia and Somaliland. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, governs a fractious Ethiopia, grappling with widespread ethnic conflicts and increasingly intensifying armed rebellions.

Ethiopia's government, emerging from a devastating civil war in the Tigray region, faces fresh pogroms by rebel forces from the Amhara and Oromo communities - the two largest ethnic groups - challenging the authority in Addis Ababa. Regionally, Ethiopia is in a precarious position. The détente with Eritrea is crumbling as mutual acrimony between Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and President Isaias Afwerki of Eritrea intensifies. Tensions with Egypt over the Renaissance Dam are reaching a boiling point, as Cairo recently

withdrew its representative from a platform for negotiations on how to share the waters of the Nile River. Relations with neighbouring Sudan are not at their best since December, when PM Abiy extended a red carpet welcome for the leader of Sudan's Rapid Support Forces, a staunch foe of the Sovereign Council that rules Sudan.

Economically, Ethiopia is experiencing severe financial strain. Last month, the government failed to pay \$33m in interest on its international government bond and in recent years, it has struggled to maintain sufficient hard currency, restricting the movement of United States dollars out of the country. The official exchange rate is considerably lower than that of the black market, a reliable indicator of deep financial woes. For Abdi, the leader of the Somalia breakaway region of Somaliland, the situation is equally dire on the domestic front. Last year, he lost approximately a third of the erstwhile "British-Somaliland" territory to SSC-Khataumo, a regional administration recognised by the Federal Government of Somalia.

Other communities, notably in the Awdal region, are also rising up as a result of the MOU with Ethiopia. Last week, the defence minister of Somaliland, who hails from the same region, resigned in protest of the MOU. On top of that, President Abdi's five-year term expired more than a year ago. An unelected senate, known as "Guurti", extended his term by two years, to the objection of Somaliland's opposition parties in the elected lower house of the regional parliament.

This MOU, therefore, is widely seen in Ethiopia and Somaliland as a desperate attempt by their leaders to deflect attention away from their deep domestic troubles. However, the global response and domestic reactions have been remarkably swift and consistent. The MOU has been met with a swift and unanimous international response, affirming the inviolability of Somalia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Major global and regional powers, including the African Union, the Arab League, the Organisation of

Islamic Cooperation, the European Union, China, the United Kingdom and the US, among others, have stood firm against Ethiopia's violation of the sovereignty of Somalia.

China's strong response is particularly significant given Somaliland's ties with Taiwan and Somalia's historic support for the "One China" policy. Russia, on the other hand, has remained silent, possibly seeing an opportunity to further its strategic interests in the region. On the African front, Ethiopia could find itself in isolation if it proceeds to recognise Somaliland and violates a founding principle of the African Union, which is to safeguard the territorial integrity of member states.

Ethiopia's reckless action could lead to a campaign to move the AU headquarters from Addis Ababa, as it would be deemed inherently unfit to host a union built on respecting the sovereignty of all member states. Moreover, the vast majority of AU member states are principally and politically opposed to recognising secessionist movements as that would open a can of worms across the continent. The MOU threatens to reignite historical hostilities between Ethiopia and Somalia. The two nations have a history of conflict, notably the 1977-1978 war, and the 1,600km (994-mile) border between Somalia and Ethiopia remains officially disputed. This latest move by Ethiopia is by far the most significant violation of Somalia's sovereignty and territorial integrity since its independence in 1960.

Should Ethiopia proceed with establishing a naval base in Somaliland, Somalia's strategic response would be multifaceted and equally dramatic. Among the proportional countermeasures it may undertake, Somalia would almost immediately sever diplomatic ties, eject all Ethiopian forces from Somalia and suspend virtually all commercial transactions. That might include banning Ethiopian Airlines from using the Somali airspace - a move that would almost certainly cripple Africa's biggest airline and the largest source of hard currency for Ethiopia. Additionally, Somalia

might seek to sign strategic defence pacts with Egypt, Eritrea and other countries as part of its long-term territorial fortification strategy. Such moves would not sit well with Ethiopia, and the resulting escalation could trigger a regional conflagration in the Horn of Africa, already one of the most volatile regions around the world.

Perhaps more ominously for regional stability, the Ethiopian action could radicalise tens of thousands of young Somalis who are already outraged by what they view as a historic enemy dismembering their country. Coincidentally, it was Ethiopia's 2006-2008 invasion of Somalia that gave rise to al-Shabab, the most violent militant group in Africa today. This MOU would be the most poignant recruitment tool for violent extremist groups as well as for irredentist movements.

In signing this MOU with Somaliland, Ethiopia gambled on a rules-based international world order, weakened by the wars in Ukraine and Gaza. However, the response from Somalia and across the world has been firm and has reflected strong support for its sovereignty. Rather than pursuing this dangerous path, Ethiopia should engage directly with the Federal Government of Somalia to discuss cooperative arrangements, such as the utilisation of existing Somali ports, following the model between Djibouti and Ethiopia. This approach would be more conducive to regional stability and respect for Somali sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity.

Somalia has repeatedly affirmed its willingness to engage constructively with Ethiopia on mutually beneficial trading arrangements that include the usage of its ports by its larger neighbour to the south. And Ethiopia has many things to offer to Somalia, such as cheap electricity and transportation and logistics hubs. But the path that Addis Ababa has taken with this MOU assures a mutually destructive outcome for both countries. The only difference is that, more than most countries around the world, Somalia knows how to survive - and even thrive - under a comprehensive state failure. Ethiopia, on the other hand, wouldn't be able to cope with the resulting conflagration.

American cook and poison dosage

Ghassan Charbel

THE new Middle East crisis went to the "Guterres clinic" and returned with international disappointment. Russia, which is involved in the Ukrainian war, is not an effective doctor despite its military presence in Syria. Chinese medicine is not the appropriate treatment for this type of disease. Europe, which is frightened on its borders, cannot reassure others. Only the American surgeon remained, despite the comments on his methods of diagnosis, anesthesia and stitches.

A decade ago, America hinted at resigning from the thorny Middle East. It exhausted it and got tired of it. Washington said that its momentousness had declined and that it was not the stage for the "great fight." Priorities have changed. America's first concern is preventing the birth of the Chinese era or at least delaying its birth. But the Middle East cannot be forgotten. It is a land of wealth, paths and conflicts that sometimes surpass its own borders. Today, the US is involved in the region and is called upon to extinguish the current fire, the sparks of which are hitting US bases in Iraq and Syria and tankers in the Red Sea.

The continuation of the massacre in Gaza is costly to the countries of the region and to the global economy. It is also costly to America's interests and image at a time when it is drowning in the winds of elections. Once again, the American chef is a must, despite anxiety about his meals and doubts about the integrity of his handling of ingredients.

On Oct. 7, Hamas, under the leadership of Yahya Sinwar, dealt an unprecedented blow to Israel. This strike revealed the fragility of Israel's security and the negligence of its institutions, shook the image of the army and security institutions, and spread terror among the settlements and settlers. The earthquake necessitated America's involvement. It came with its president, fleets and ammunition. The participation of its envoys in the war Cabinet's meetings became a common sight. The US threw in its weight and its resources, and Benjamin Netanyahu launched a devastating war that flooded Gaza with the rubble of homes and the bodies of children.

America gave the political and military establishment in Israel an extended opportunity to achieve victory. But the time of the fatal Israeli strikes is over, as the Gaza war is different in its theater and nature. Now, in the fourth month of the conflict, the only question that arises is: Who can stop the war, the continuation of which exceeds the region's ability to endure?

The scene could have been different if the war had expanded in its first hours, if Hezbollah had engaged with full force from the Lebanese front, the Golan front had caught fire and if Iranian missiles had been launched from Iranian territory itself and not from Yemen.

The scenario of the great collapse - that America sent its fleets to prevent - did not happen. As of the next day, Hezbollah waged a war of distraction, while the Houthi missiles replaced a complete and open confrontation on the Lebanese-Israeli border. The past months have shown that the UN cannot be relied upon to

stop the war. Recent days have revealed that the escalation of international condemnation of the ongoing massacre in Gaza, the step of the International Court of Justice and the tension occurring within Western decision-making halls are all important factors, but they cannot stop the war. Only America can lead an effort in this direction. Without Washington, Israel cannot continue its attack. Without the US, it is not possible to crystallize a political horizon that would justify Hamas' return from the war or force it to return from it.

An integrated plan for a solution has not yet taken shape despite Antony Blinken's tours and William Burns' communications. Blinken is dealing with a region that is completely different from the one that previous American mediators were navigating. In the past, it was enough to convince country leaders to reach a settlement to implement their decision. There are new realities in the region today and, in some parts of it, governments are mingling with factions or residing under their authority. There is Iran and its role in launching the era of factions in four maps.

Those who have followed American diplomatic movements talk about ideas heard by the mediators. They talk about an Israeli decision not to stop the war except in the context of a settlement that guarantees the release of hostages and the complete exit of the Gaza Strip from the confrontation, so that it does not pose a threat to Israel. This means that Hamas shall no longer be the authority in Gaza and that the faces of Oct. 7 will not emerge again from the Strip.

On the other hand, the Palestinian side demands a specific mechanism to launch the two-state solution, as well as the "white-washing" of Israeli prisons; that is, the release of Palestinian detainees. There are those who propose that Hamas becomes a political movement and part of the Palestinian scene. Observers talk about ideas for reforming the Palestinian Authority with the aim of moving to "another generation and another mentality," with "some Arab role in the post-ceasefire phase, along with ensuring the Israeli withdrawal from the entire Gaza Strip." This role may be in the form of observers, experts or advisers who will verify the Israeli withdrawal and guarantee that the causes of the conflict are not repeated.

It is clear that the mission of the US mediator is no less than distributing poison to the parties. Netanyahu has spent his long rule assassinating the idea of a Palestinian state, so how can he facilitate it today? Hamas unleashed the October earthquake, so how could it agree to give up power when the war has not yet stripped it of its missiles and tunnels?

For Netanyahu, a state would mean drinking the poison. For Sinwar, recognizing Israel would also mean swallowing the venom. How will the American cook be able to distribute the doses of poison to the belligerents who have gone so far? This is without forgetting that the establishment of a Palestinian state would also mean removing the Palestinian card from Iran and the so-called Axis of Resistance - a removal that was among the reasons for the fall of the Oslo Accords.

Legacy of cooperation points to a brighter future

Liu Zuokui

CHINA and France established diplomatic relations on Jan 27, 1964, by issuing just two sentences - the world's shortest diplomatic communique. Despite its brevity, the communique, called a "diplomatic nuclear explosion" by the Western media, marked a watershed moment in China's relationship with Western European countries.

The establishment of Sino-French diplomatic ties reflected the two countries' strategic choices and regional and global strategic interests while contributing to a multipolar world order and laying a solid foundation for future bilateral relations. The two concise sentences that launched the bilateral ties reflect the diplomatic finesse that has characterized their interactions. This pivotal moment occurred in the 1960s, a period

marked by shifting geopolitical dynamics and the nascent Cold War. The simplicity of the declaration belied the profound implications of their decision.

As we celebrate the 60th anniversary of the establishment of China-France diplomatic relations, the historical trajectory of this partnership becomes more apparent. In traditional Chinese culture, 60 years signify the completion of a cycle - a full turn that calls for reflection and promises a new beginning. The past six decades have seen China and France weather global challenges and fast-changing international situations, showcasing their resilience and highlighting their forward-thinking relationship. The establishment of Franco-Chinese diplomatic ties had far-reaching consequences. It not only improved China's international standing, but also triggered a wave of diplomatic engagements

between China and Western countries in the early 1970s, marking a significant shift in international relations and heralding the beginning of multipolarism.

Sino-French cooperation and collaboration in the political and strategic domains have been going on for many years, with both sides learning and drawing inspiration from each other. In particular, after the launch of reform and opening-up, China sought advanced technologies and management experience from Western countries, including France. Also, China's National Development and Reform Commission studied France's national economic and social development plans during this critical period. As a result, over the years, France and China have built a mutually beneficial relationship.

In its modernization process, China has been taking measures to optimize the business environment and open up its economy wider. This includes taking unilateral opening-up measures, with an eye to attracting more European countries, including France, which highlights the broad space for collaboration between China and France. This is important because France's pursuit of autonomous strategic goals and efforts to improve its citizens' quality of life are closely linked to China's support and access to the Chinese market.

Economic and trade collaboration between China and France has remained a stable force, the bedrock of their broader relationship. Their collaboration has evolved beyond the traditional sectors of nuclear energy, high-speed railway and aerospace to include

new frontiers such as climate action, green initiatives, digital technologies and finance. And their strategic cooperation extends to fields such as luxury goods, agricultural products and tourism, reflecting the versatility and depth of their partnership. Their stable economic collaboration is not just a testament to the resilience of Sino-French relations but also helps promote future exploration and growth. As China tries to optimize its business environment and increase openness, the potential for Sino-French cooperation continues to expand.

As for the cultural bond between China and France, it has played a crucial role in shaping their relationship. France, a global cultural powerhouse, and China, with its 5,000-year history, have found common ground in their pursuit of cultural development and innovation. France's

historical pursuit of liberty, equality and fraternity complements China's values of benevolence, harmony and inclusiveness. This convergence of values and aspirations fosters a partnership in which both sides can explore and innovate. China places a high value on cultural inheritance and development, drawing inspiration from its rich history to foster creativity and innovation. France, renowned for its cultural richness, serves as a beacon for global intellectual endeavors.

Thus their collaboration in the cultural domain is expected to yield significant results, further deepening mutual understanding and appreciation. The potential for further exploration and growth is vast, and the two countries seem poised to unleash that potential to help build a world characterized by cooperation and stability.

The China Daily



# What could fall apart after Trump’s victory

Richard Galant

IN 2018, Irish journalist Fintan O'Toole proposed the "Yeats Test" to determine how bad things are in the world. "The proposition is simple: the more quotable Yeats seems to commentators and politicians, the worse things are," O'Toole wrote. He noted, for example, that after Donald Trump was elected president in 2016, "there was a massive surge in online searches for - and presumably readings of - Yeats's magnificently doom-laden 'The Second Coming.'"

The 1919 poem by William Butler Yeats is full of memorable lines, including "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world" that can be conveniently applied to the fragility of the moment, whatever the subject. Some sentiment like that might have been on Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell's mind Wednesday when he admitted that the months-long negotiation to reach a bipartisan compromise on border security and aid to Ukraine may be doomed by opposition from the presumed Republican presidential nominee, former President Donald Trump. CNN reported that Trump has been urging Republicans to kill the deal "in part because he wants to campaign on the issue this November and doesn't want President Joe Biden to score a victory in an area where he is politically vulnerable." Senators from both parties are still trying to move the proposal forward, but its fate is uncertain.

Trump's path to the GOP nomination was bolstered Tuesday by a double-digit win over former UN Ambassador Nikki Haley in the New Hampshire primary. "This isn't the Olympics," wrote Raul Reyes. "There are no medals for second

place. Although ... Haley is the last contender standing between former President Donald Trump and the Republican nomination...most Republican voters do not want an alternative to Trump; they overwhelmingly back him. Polling shows Trump even leads Haley in her home state of South Carolina." Haley's quest is going nowhere, wrote Daniel McCarthy. "As Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis showed in the days between his second-place finish in Iowa and his withdrawal from the race, it's agony to keep campaigning when you know you only face humiliation in the races to come."

"The Republican Party is united behind Trump, and with optimal conditions for an opponent like Haley, Trump was still unstoppable." "Trump's challenge, now that the nomination fight is effectively over, will be to appeal to voters who are turned off by his cult of personality," wrote Paul Begala. "His angry, bitter speech Tuesday night was a terrible beginning for the general election. Did the grievance-filled rant against Haley sound like a winner to you? No, it sounded like a guy who is in deep doo-doo with independents." Trump's election-night needling of South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott, who endorsed the president over Haley, stood out. "Did you ever think (about how) she actually appointed you, Tim? ... And you're the senator of her state," Trump said to Scott, "You must really hate her." No, Scott replied. "I just love you." "This," SE Cupp observed, "is yet another glowing example of the Great Emasculation of the GOP by Donald Trump, where grown men throw themselves at a guy who has smeared and slammed them ... in hopes of

becoming his VP?"

The former president, who has taken days away from the campaign trail to sit in a New York courtroom for a defamation trial he was not required to attend, suffered a costly defeat Friday when the jury awarded writer E. Jean Carroll \$83.3 million over remarks Trump made about her in 2019. The verdict, observed Ana Marie Cox, "is far more than a judgment against Trump. Crucially, it's a vindication of Carroll - and a statement in favor of every survivor who ever questioned whether what happened to them was 'bad enough' to count as sexual assault." No presidential candidate has ever shouldered as much legal baggage as Trump, historian Julian Zelizer pointed out. Yet Democrats should not underestimate his chances in November. "The qualities that propelled him in the past to command media attention continue to be effective. Even if he has lost many steps as a result of age - as Haley and others have argued - Trump continues to retain all of his talents as a showman. Trump still knows how to do television. He is the entertainer in chief." For the next 280-plus days, American politics is likely to be dominated by the campaign between President Joe Biden and his predecessor Donald Trump, however much people might prefer a different set of choices. Biden, 81, and Trump, 77, are the oldest candidates to ever run for reelection as president.

There is an age minimum for the presidency: 35 years. Should there be a maximum age for the job? CNN Opinion is asking two experts to debate the pros and cons of an age limit - and we're asking you to pose questions for them. Please fill out the form below. Another test of the

"things fall apart" theory is taking place in the Middle East, as CIA Director Bill Burns meets with regional leaders in search of a deal to free the hostages seized by Hamas on October 7 and to bring the Gaza war to a temporary, if not permanent, halt. The negotiations are sensitive, volatile and high-stakes. Lishay Lavi, whose husband Omri Miran was abducted in Israel and taken to Gaza, wrote an open letter at CNN Opinion, updating him on her life and that of their daughters Roni and Alma. "The last time we saw each other, I told you that I love you, that I'll care for the girls, and that you should not try to be a hero," Lavi wrote. "You told me that you love me, and then Roni tried to run to you. Thankfully, I managed to stop her in time."

The response from the UK? Don't mess with our national beverage, Rosa Prince noted. "I took up the tea habit when I was about 12 or 13, and like most of my countrymen and women have had a cuppa four or five times a day ever since. It's less edgy than coffee, cheaper than gin and generally a soothing, unifying kind of thing, particularly when shared with others. You're offered a cuppa char if you've given birth, witnessed a murder, come home from a crappy day at work." "And there are definite wrongs and rights about how to brew up. Too weak, and you'll be accused of serving 'gnat's piss'; leave the bag in too long and it's 'stew.'" "As to the question of whether or not to add sugar; to my mind it seems a little immature over the age of puberty but who am I to judge?" "However, salt? Salt? Whether in the seas of Boston Harbour or some mad prof's lab in rural Pennsylvania, tea and salt do not mix and that, my Yank friends, is that."

CNN

# There is a seismic shift in Muslim American community

Nazia Kazi

ON November 1, less than a month into Israel's onslaught on Gaza, United States President Joe Biden's administration announced a national strategy to battle Islamophobia. The move came as anti-Muslim incidents were on the rise nationwide.

On October 14, Wade Al-Fayoume, a six-year-old Palestinian American child, was stabbed to death in Chicago while his mother was critically wounded in a racially motivated assault by their landlord. Five days later, Jasmer Singh, a 66-year-old Sikh man, was beaten to death in New York City by a man screaming "turban man". (Observant Sikhs are often mistaken for Muslims.) On October 28, Muslim American physician Talat Jehan Khan was stabbed to death in Texas.

Biden's initiative was mirrored by some US academic institutions, which adopted anti-Islamophobia measures, typically alongside anti-Semitism prevention policies. Stanford, the University of Maryland, Columbia and Harvard are among the educational institutions that announced such initiatives.

But the White House strategy to fight Islamophobia has been met with widespread scorn and ridicule. X (formerly Twitter) users responded to Vice President Kamala Harris's announcement of the initiative with criticism and pointed questions about US complicity in the atrocities taking place in the Gaza Strip. On campuses, the crackdown on pro-Palestinian activism and advocacy has belied universities' anti-Islamophobia initiatives. These reactions reflect Muslim Americans' growing rejection of the attempt to replace systemic political demands with those focused on intolerance or exclusion. This marks a break from the past two decades, when a focus on cultural acceptance or interfaith dialogue, rather than political critique and action, shaped Muslim American advocacy and organising.

This shift was apparent in the funeral of the slain child Wade, which was attended by thousands and became a veritable Free Palestine rally. Speakers condemned the pro-Israel slant of US media coverage, the blank cheque given by the US to the Israeli occupation forces to commit atrocities and the years-long siege on Gaza that has hobbled life for its residents. Wade's death was mourned not as a matter of anti-Muslim bigotry or hatred but a grisly domestic flashpoint in the US-Israel alliance.

A similar position was taken following the shooting of three Palestinian college students in November, whose keffiyeh scarves likely marked them for the attack. When asked about the assault, Kinnan Abdulhamid, one of the survivors, insisted that the focus should remain on calls for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza rather than

on his personal experience. Abdulhamid's friend Hisham Awartani, who was left paralysed from the waist down by the shooting, also refused to have his ordeal repackaged into an instance of anti-Muslim intolerance. Awartani said he was but "one casualty in a much wider conflict. Had I been shot in the West Bank, where I grew up, the medical services which saved my life here would have likely been withheld by the Israeli army. The soldier who shot me would go home and never be convicted." Meanwhile, the Muslim and Arab communities have come out en masse at demonstrations calling for an end to US material support to Israel and an immediate, permanent ceasefire.

This mobilisation is a far cry from the dynamics of the past two decades, as my research on Muslim multiculturalism during the "war on terror" years illustrates.

Following 9/11, Muslim American organisations engaged in cultural and attitudinal projects meant to combat misconceptions about their communities. Many believed that changing America's perceptions (by teaching about the significance of the Hajj or Ramadan or refuting stereotypes about hijab) would legitimise Muslim presence in the US. In my ethnographic fieldwork, I was told that raising questions of US militarism would jeopardise the fragile project of Muslim American legitimacy. These years saw a proliferation of cultural awareness events. On college campuses, Muslim Student Associations held Islam Awareness Weeks, again motivated by the belief that correcting misperceptions about Muslims would defeat Islamophobia. An annual International Hijab Day invited non-Muslim women to don a headscarf in solidarity with Muslim women. Museum exhibits showcased inventions from the Muslim world.

Diversity initiatives, like the one by Gap, in which Sikh actor Waris Ahluwalia was featured in an ad campaign, were widely commended. After one billboard featuring the advertisement was defaced with racist graffiti, Gap used it as its Twitter banner, celebrating their diverse casting and inspiring a viral #thankYouGap campaign across Sikh and Muslim America. Muslim American activists also joined various interfaith initiatives, such as the Sisterhood of Salaam-Shalom, which was meant to bridge Muslim-Jewish divides through dialogue and friendship, and NewGround: A Muslim-Jewish Partnership for Change, which was tasked with building Muslim-Jewish relationships.

Not all Muslim Americans embraced these initiatives. Some often marginalised voices offered trenchant criticism, accusing

such programmes of "faith-washing", that is using interfaith dialogue to distract from the Israeli state's colonial violence against the Palestinian people. To these critics, bromides of tolerance and understanding turned Palestinian dispossession into a matter of opinion and individual differences while opposition to Israeli apartheid was explained away with a supposed "primordial hostility" between Jews and Muslims, which could be overcome through social exchange.

Similar ruptures emerged around the annual Ramadan dinner organised by the White House, which convenes Muslim American leaders for an iftar meal with the president. President Bill Clinton's administration held the first White House community iftar, and all presidents since then have followed suit. Even Donald Trump, who issued a "Muslim ban" during his presidency, hosted the event during his term. While some saw the White House iftar as a chance for Muslims to connect with America's power-brokers, others condemned attendees for breaking bread with the architects of coups in the Muslim world, assassination programmes, and systematic surveillance and deportations of Muslims. Many Muslim American organisations boycotted the 2021 White House iftar, citing Biden's policies on Israel.

Today, these fissures within the Muslim and Arab communities are closing. With increasing fervour, Muslim America is united in demanding a shift in US Middle East policy.

Muslim and Arab refusal to support Biden, especially in key states like Michigan, has alarmed Democratic Party leaders. "It is my opinion," writes Palestinian-American scholar Steven Salaita, "that liberals who expect Arab Americans to forget about Biden's endorsement of Zionist genocide when November comes around are profoundly mistaken." The rejection of faithwashing attempts is now widespread.

Muslim Americans are joined by legions of non-Muslims agitating for Palestinian liberation. Rather than wishing to see more colourful boardrooms or government liaisons on Islamophobia, they now keep a weather eye on the enduring system of apartheid and its undeniable project of ethnic cleansing and genocide.

Biden's national strategy on Islamophobia has fallen flat among Muslim voters. Whether this is enough to push this voting bloc beyond two-party electoralism, opting instead for third-party options and mass-movement organising, remains to be seen. Yet it marks a seismic shift in Muslim American consciousness, which no longer accepts cultural tolerance and interfaith understanding as a remedy to the problems of empire.

Aljazeera

# Can former Portuguese colony Macao hold on to its unique culture?

Cindy Sui

MACAO is known as "the Las Vegas of Asia," with its glitzy casinos and huge gaming industry surpassing that of its US counterpart, but the region is also home to a unique ethnic group - the Macanese. Almost 25 years after the former Portuguese colony returned to Chinese sovereignty in 1999, this community of native-born mixed-race Chinese-Portuguese people is feeling the challenges of maintaining their population, language and culture.

Their number - 13,021 people according to the latest census - as well as reduced use of the Portuguese language, is raising worries among Macanese that Macao may lose what's unique about its identity - its Portuguese influences. In addition, the government last year confirmed that it has ended preferential treatment for Portuguese nationals wanting to move to the city. "This means our Portuguese culture will be weak for the next generation," said Delfim Chacim, retiree from a Macanese family that has lived in Macao for four generations. His granddaughter speaks Portuguese, but he said many Macanese youngsters cannot, even though Portuguese is an official language along with Chinese, because hardly anyone speaks it anymore. Most people in Macao are ethnic Chinese and speak Cantonese. In recent years, fluency in English has become much higher than Portuguese, according to Macao's Statistics and Census Service.

As time passes, Chacim and others fear, the only thing left will be colonial-era buildings, such as the landmark Ruins of Saint Paul's, a 17th century Catholic religious complex. "All we'll see will be the architecture built by the Portuguese people, such as the fortress, but they won't know the real story," Chacim said. Macao "will be no different from any other province in China" without its characteristic language and culture. Although the latest census conducted in 2021 showed the number of people who are either full

or mixed Portuguese has increased by nearly 5,000 compared to 2011, since 2001, shortly after the handover, the population has remained around 2% of the population. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Macau's overall population lost about 10,000 residents, including Portuguese expatriates and migrant workers due to tough quarantine policies and border restrictions. It's not clear how many of those who left have returned. Adding to the fears of a declining Macanese and Portuguese culture and population, Macao's government quietly in recent years and officially last year stopped giving resident ID cards and a path to permanent residency to Portuguese nationals who want to live in the city. Previously, Portuguese nationals received the cards once they found a job in Macao and could become permanent residents after seven years. Now, they are treated like other foreigners and given only a temporary work permit, unless they have special skills or family already in the city.

"We want our next generation to be proud of what we are. We don't want them to lose their culture, not knowing what it was like the last 20, 30, 50 years," said Ivone de Jesus, a fifth generation Macanese who helps run her family's popular restaurant Cozinha Aida, which serves home-cooked Macanese cuisine passed down through the generations. De Jesus said her late grandmother, Aida, who carefully saved the recipes before she passed away, was one of only 50 people who could speak the creole dialect called Patua in Macao. The dialect is derived from Portuguese mixed with Malay and Sinhalese, and later became strongly influenced by Cantonese, but it is almost extinct. De Jesus and others said the government has given support to maintaining Portuguese and Macanese cultures, including helping restaurants like her family's preserve their cuisines. The government also

encourages people to learn the language by providing funding to schools to teach Portuguese. But many Macanese and Portuguese disagree with ending preferential treatment for Portuguese nationals, pointing out that unless the population of Portuguese speakers grows, it will be hard to preserve Macao's Portuguese identity and language.

"First of all the Portuguese people are what's giving Macao its culture here. ... Let's not talk about how good or bad the place was run. It is a very subjective matter, but Macao is Macao because they were here. It was ruled by them. It brings the flavor, the culture, the color, everything, even the food, the bloodline ... so it would be really important that Portuguese people come back here," de Jesus said. Miguel Senna Fernandes, president of the Macanese Association, said the government's decision contradicts its policy of promoting Portuguese language fluency so that Macao can be a platform to promote relations between China and Portuguese-speaking countries. "Macao's government should attract Portuguese to come and settle down in Macao, but they're not doing this. They're doing the opposite," Fernandes said. "They're giving this kind of image that they're not welcoming them. ... What's the use of promoting Portuguese in the territory when you don't want the people who speak it; it's like wanting to promote Chinese but you don't want Chinese people." Jorge Menezes, a Portuguese lawyer in Macao, sees the cancellation of preferential treatment for Portuguese people as part of a trend.

"The Portuguese are no longer special. ... That's of course a betrayal of the whole idea of the relationship between Portugal and Macao after the handover," Menezes said. "The language is vanishing in official functions. ... It's part of a trend of Macao being less autonomous towards China than it was meant to be under the bilateral treaty with

Portugal and Macao's Constitution." VOA reached out to Macao authorities for comment about the concerns and why it decided to cancel preferential treatment for Portuguese people but has yet to receive a response. Over the years, the government has tried to protect architectural heritage and required casino operators' winning concessions to invest in revitalizing old districts. The Macao Government Tourism Office, or MGTTO, told VOA that it and other government agencies have been promoting the unique culture of Macanese cuisine. "Macao's designation as a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy in 2017 is highly relevant to help preserve Macao's unique gastronomic cultural heritage. Immediately after the designation, MGTTO together with other entities unfolded an array of initiatives, with the preservation of Macanese food as part of the city's heritage as one of the main tasks," it said in a written reply. De Jesus said she doesn't think the government is trying to reduce the Portuguese population, which was always small, even before the handover.

"There's a saying that China, this place, doesn't want foreigners here. Actually, I see it differently. For the last 10, 20, 30 years, we've always had different foreigners from different countries here. They were workers, experts, professionals, business owners. I'm not sure, but my personal opinion is that what China wants to do is ... they want job opportunities-wise to go back to local people," de Jesus said. But De Jesus and other Macao residents agree it is the combination of the two cultures that makes Macao special. "I'm talking about Portuguese, Portuguese, Portuguese, but before the Portuguese were here, we were also Chinese, so the Chinese were part of the Portuguese culture and the Portuguese were part of the Chinese culture, so I think it's important that we always maintain an identity of having both," said de Jesus.

VOA

# Our museums are now at risk of being looted

Michael Mosbacher

THE British wokerati have developed a new affection - a profound respect for monarchy and all things regal. In their rarefied world, the love is inevitably not for the House of Windsor, but rather for the long-expired kingdoms of west Africa. Western institutions are responding favourably to the call to "return" artifacts to faded royal courts. That such sacred objects could ever have been sullied by being traded is cause for bien pensant outrage.

The Victoria and Albert and British museums have this week agreed to "lend" back 32 mostly gold objects originating from the Asante, or Ashanti, royal court to the current Asantehene, or king. The items include those seized by British troops during a punitive raid in 1874. The Asante king, now a purely honorific title with no constitutional position in contemporary Ghana, will display the gold peace pipe, swords, spoons and jewelry within his royal compound when a museum reopens this year to celebrate the silver anniversary of his reign.

Is what is happening a "loan" in any meaningful sense? Does anyone think these gorgeous, precious baubles will ever return to South Kensington and Bloomsbury? Britain's national collections are

severely restricted from deaccessioning by statute. Without legislation, they can only dispose of duplicates or items beyond repair. Only since 2009 can our national collections return items looted by the Nazis to their legitimate owners. Just one such claim, for three Meissen figures in the V&A, has been successful. Our great museums have until recently been in the business of holding on to their collections.

The Asante loan now finds a way to work around the legislation. The Commons will not have its say. V&A Director and Labour ex-shadow cabinet minister Tristram Hunt and his BM opposite number discovered a device allowing works to be sent wherever today's fashions demand. The BM chairman George Osborne may yet employ the wheeze to deliver the Elgin marbles to Athens. Demands from Egypt, India, and even Italy, will surely follow. The current vogue for "returning" objects to Africa was turbocharged in 2020 by Dan Hicks, professor of contemporary archaeology at Oxford and curator of its Pitt Rivers museum, with his book The British Museums. It gives an account of how the British seized the Benin bronzes from their royal household in 1897 and

made their way into Western museum collections. Reassuringly for someone in his position, the professor is committed to the "physical dismantling of the white infrastructure of every anthropology and 'world culture' museum". The "return" of Benin's ornamental brasses has become an international cause celebre with museums from New York to Berlin pledging to do so. Jesus College Cambridge, unrestricted by pesky legislation, was the first home institution to get in on the act, sending back an Okukor, or cockerel, in 2021. But where should they go, to the state of Nigeria or the Royal court of the Oba, or King, of Benin? The regal route is the one finding increasing favour among those of progressive persuasion.

But what was the nature of these kingdoms? Both the Asante empire and Benin were slaving nations. The Asantehenes sold gold and slaves to European powers; for the Obas it was ivory and slaves. Human sacrifice was an honoured facet of the Benin court. The slightest whiff of any association of a Western institution with the profits of slavery, however tangential, now leads to an unerascable taint. Why do the same rules not apply to the west African kingdoms which grew powerful on the back of human bondage?

# Lao-da US should act like a big brother but not in the Orwellian sense

Kang Bing

LAO da, the two Chinese characters, in the past, meant the eldest son of a family. Later, the term was used to by bandits and gangsters to address their boss. Now, it is a popular but unofficial term used to address the top official of a company, a university, even a government organization. Traditionally, being the eldest son of a family more often than not meant he would inherit the family business, because he was expected to be fair to the other brothers and guide them to win new glory for the family, even at the cost of sacrificing his personal interests.

Although modern laws stipulate that all children, both sons and daughters, have equal rights of inheritance, older generations still tend to give Lao-da a bigger portion of the family fortune, if not the entire family wealth and business. That kind of arrangement, though unequal judged by present laws, was usually accepted by the other brothers and sisters as a show of respect to their elder brother, who among other things would also protect them from bullies in

school.

One of my neighbors in Sanya, Hainan province, is such a Lao-da of five brothers and sisters. Each year, when he, a retired English teacher, visited the tropical city to escape the freezing cold of his home city in Northeast China, he brought one or two of his brothers and/or sisters with him and paid for all their expenses, from boarding and dining to travel. His siblings told me that they respected their eldest brother because he behaved like a real Lao-da - he was kind, fair and was always ready to sacrifice his interests for the sake of the other siblings and to maintain harmony in the family.

I wish we had more Lao-das like the retired English teacher who would peacefully and tactfully resolve family disputes. I wish we had more such Lao-das in our companies and government organizations who would help settle internal conflicts. I wish we had a global Lao-da like my neighbor who would help bring peace and prosperity instead of triggering wars and confrontations.

The mention of global Lao-da would prompt some people to turn their eyes to the United States. The US became the world's biggest economic power just before the turn of the 20th century and has maintained its position for more than 130 years. It became the No 1 military power after the end of World War II and its defense budget now makes up more than 36 percent of the world's total. More important, it became the only superpower after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s.

Few countries today will dare to question the authority of the US, which has nearly a dozen of its aircraft carriers patrolling the oceans and has built hundreds of military bases in other countries.

We common folks respect the US' Lao-da status, thanks to its role in defeating Nazi Germany in World War II, its help to China in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45) and its support to liberation movements that freed many countries from colonial

rule. But the global Lao-da should behave like a real Lao-da, not sometimes but always, not only by showing its authority and strength but also by playing fair.

It should not have sanctioned countries for decades just because they refused to toe its line. It should not have bombed countries for months on flimsy ideological grounds. It should not have invaded countries, especially one country where it has killed hundreds of thousands of civilians by showing to the public a small bag of washing powder as the evidence of "weapons of mass destruction". It should not have vetoed UN proposals to end the Israel-Palestine conflict in which more than 25,000 Palestinians have already been killed. People feel uncomfortable when a US president says he wants peace and democracy while hurting the interests of others. People feel unhappy when another US president says it would be a disaster if people in a certain country lived the same high-quality life as Americans. The US will be in the Lao-da's position for many more years. So we can only pray that it behaves like one.





BAHAWALPUR: Artisan preparing traditional curtains on roadside.

## PSX stays bullish, gains 609 more points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with a bullish trend on Friday, gaining 609.18 points, a positive change of 0.98 per cent, closing at 63,002.92 points against 62,393.74 points the previous trading day.

A total of 263,547,879 shares valuing Rs 10.730

billion were traded during the day as compared to 270,537,523 shares valuing Rs. 11.625 billion the last day. Some 336 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 217 of them recorded gains and 92 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 27 remained unchanged.

The three top-trading

companies were K-Electric Limited with 26,580,417 shares at Rs.4.68 per share, PIAC(A) with 25,838,500 shares at Rs.10.94 per share and Pak Petroleum with 18,483,443 shares at Rs.114.34 per share.

Ismail Industries Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.83.00 per share price, closing at Rs.1,240.00,

whereas the runner-up was Pakistan Tobacco Company Limited with a Rs.37.11 rise in its per share price to Rs.1,049.99. KSB Pumps Company Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.9.40 per share closing at Rs.118.60, followed by Bela Automotives Limited with a Rs.6.58 decline to close at Rs.81.13.

## PAJCCI for issuing special passes to truck drivers transporting goods between Pakistan, Afghanistan

PESHAWAR (APP): Coordinator Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI), Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi has suggested issuing special passes to truck drivers transporting cargo goods between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

In a press statement issued here on Friday, Zia Sarhadi said the suggestion is based on streamlining and smoothing of Pak-Afghan trade which was recently halted for ten days over condition of visas by truck drivers. Around 1000 truck drivers

will be issued special passes instead of visas for carrying their goods with ease between Pakistan and Afghanistan, he added. He said these trucks should be registered with Customs and Transport Departments in Pakistan and Transport and Gumrak in Afghanistan. The owners of heavy vehicles should also be charged a nominal fees for issuance of special pass, he added.

Zia Sarhadi, who is also President of Frontier Custom Agents Associations, said during a recent halt of around ten

days for transportation of cargo between the two countries, hundreds of trucks got stuck on both sides of the border and businessmen faced hefty losses due to rotting of perishable items. The importers and exporters of both countries also have to pay enormous amounts as detention charges at a rate of US dollars 120 to 180 per day. He said that the issuance of special passes to trucks, allowing them to ply between Karachi to Mazhar Sharif, will help in easing the transportation of cargo goods and promotion of trade between the two neighboring countries.

## Mobile industry booms with production of 84.4 mln units

ISLAMABAD (APP): The local companies have produced 84.4 million mobile devices reflecting the industry's phenomenal growth that created thousands of jobs in last five years. According to annual report of the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), 25 million smartphones were among the total devices produced from January 2019 to September 2023.

It said 33 local and foreign companies locally

established manufacturing plants under the Mobile Device Manufacturing (MDM) Regulations introduced in 2021.

These companies, operating both as standalone entities and through joint ventures, obtained a 10-year MDM authorization.

The country also initiated export of locally manufactured handsets, with 120,000 SEEEO brand mobiles labeled as 'Manufactured in Pakistan' exported to the African

market in December 2022.

The Device Identification Registration and Blocking System (DIRBS), introduced by the PTA, have provided a level playing field for foreign investments in the mobile device manufacturing industry in Pakistan.

In addition to promoting local manufacturing, DIRBS has been a source of revenue generation for the government, collecting Rs 48.8 billion in Customs duties in the individual cat-

egory from January 15, 2019, to October 25, 2023.

This revenue stream remained untapped before the implementation of DIRBS. Leveraging this system, PTA has blocked 758,113 International Mobile Equipment Identities (IMEIs) reported as stolen. DIRBS has also identified and blocked 35.5 million non-compliant IMEIs, including 7.3 million duplicate or cloned IMEI numbers.

## Fourteenth edition of the 'Pakistan Consumer Confidence Index (CCI) Q2 2023-24' launched

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: This publication systematically evaluates consumers' confidence in the economy and their personal financial situation from July 2023 to September 2023. The CCI report gauges sentiments across four critical parameters i.e. Household Financial Situation, Country's Economic Situation, Unemployment Situation, and Household Savings. The index provides insights into both 'Current Sentiments', reflecting economic changes experienced in the last six months, and 'Future Expectations', anticipating changes for the next six months. It offers a comprehensive view of consumers' perspectives across the country, making it a valuable tool for understanding the economic landscape and how it can be expected to unfold.

Mr. Niran Rehman, Chief Business Officer of Dun & Bradstreet Pakistan stated, "I find the Consumer Confidence Index (CCI) report to be a crucial tool for various stakeholders, including Policy Makers, Development Financial Institutions, and businesses across sectors.

The insights gathered from this report will not only aid in understanding the current economic landscape but also provide

valuable foresight into consumer sentiments. It is particularly relevant for industries directly impacted by consumer behavior. D&B Pakistan remains committed to providing insightful data that contributes to informed decision-making in these evolving economic times in Pakistan."

Mr. Bilal Ijaz Gilani, Executive Director Gallup Pakistan, while commenting on the findings of the report, added, "It is with satisfaction that we note that the Consumer Confidence Index continues to improve in Pakistan for a second quarter. Inflation slowing down, exports rising, and relative stability in economic policymaking seems to be driving optimism at the consumer end."

In this survey a telephonic discussion was conducted with 1,403 respondents during October and November 2023 and thus relates to Second Quarter of Financial Year 2023-24 (FY2023-24).

The Consumer Confidence Index ranges from 0 to 200, with 100 as the neutral value.

A score of less than 100 indicates pessimism and above 100 indicates optimism.

The current quarter's Consumer Confidence Index is 79.7 points, com-

pared to 65.8 points in the previous quarter. Thus, the overall consumer confidence has alleviated from extremely pessimistic to pessimistic; the last time it was in this range was over a year ago.

About three out of five consumers were hopeful that the economic situation would either stay the same or improve in the next six months. Similar sentiments were observed regarding the Household Financial Situation. Situation improvement as well.

Despite improvements in Prices of Daily Essentials and Household Savings, employment opportunities remained a key concern. Four out of five consumers surveyed felt that the Unemployment Situation has gotten worse in the last six months; however, they were relatively more optimistic about the future with half of the consumers expecting the employment situation to get worse.

Current Sentiments of consumers (Current CCI) increased 14.2% and 13.5% in KPK and Punjab respectively, while Balochistan witnessed a lower increase of 3.8%. In Sindh, the Current CCI was 62.5, indicating a lower level of pessimism than the previous quarter.

Due to early signs of economic rebound seen in Pakistan during Jul-Aug

2023, because of the Stand-By-Arrangement with the IMF, respondents were less pessimistic about the future in all the provinces in which the survey was conducted. Future Expectations of consumers (Future CCI) improved 15.8% to 95.9.

This improvement can be largely attributed to consumers' positive sentiments relating to the country's Economic Situation and the Unemployment Situation in the next six months compared to the current situation. However, Future CCI is still marginally in the pessimistic range.

Overall, consumers across Pakistan are relatively less pessimistic about their current Household Financial Situation than they were compared to the previous quarter.

The current components of the other parameters are still in the pessimistic range.

Household Income in the coming year, as expected by consumers, compared to the year before is the only parameter that is in the optimistic range with a Net Indicator of 106.4. This is a reflection of buoyant sentiments amongst consumers and, relatively, adverse conditions experienced a year earlier – in terms of the potential to earn income.

## Weekly inflation dips by 0.28 pc

ISLAMABAD (APP): The weekly inflation measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed a decrease of 0.28 per cent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on February 1st, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday. According to the PBS data, the SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 317.65 points as compared to 318.55 points during the past week.

As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 39.45 per cent.

The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 covers 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups.

The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs. 17,732, decreased by 0.85 percent and went down to 310.42 points from last week's 313.09 points.

The SPI for consumption groups from Rs. 17,732-22,888, Rs. 22,889-29,517; Rs. 29,518-44,175 and above Rs. 44,175, decreased by 0.71 percent, 0.53 percent, 0.41 and 0.06 percent respectively.

During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 12 (23.53%) items increased, 17 (33.33%) items decreased and 22 (43.14%)

items remained stable.

The items, which recorded a decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week basis included tomatoes (18.28%), eggs (7.77%), onions (6.99%), LPG (1.53%), tea packet (1.29%), potatoes (1.25%), pulse masoor (0.80%), cooking oil 5 litre (0.36%) and mustard oil (0.28%).

The items that recorded an increase in their average prices on a week-on-week basis included petrol (5.20%), chicken (1.88%), diesel (0.95%), energy saver (0.70%), bananas (0.68%), salt powdered (0.55%), pulse moong (0.34%), mutton (0.33%), gur (0.21%), beef (0.15%), tea prepared (0.14%) and georgette (0.10%).

On a year-on-year basis, the items that witnessed a decrease in prices included onions (15.10%), mustard oil (10.86%), bananas (10.15%), vegetable ghee 1 kg (3.58%), LPG (1.63%) and vegetable ghee 2.5 kg (0.80%).

The commodities which recorded an increase in their average prices on year-on-year basis included gas charges for q1 (1108.59%), cigarettes (92.30%), tomatoes (90.40%), chilies powder (81.74%), wheat flour (61.97%), gents sponge chappal (58.05%), sugar (54.79%), gents sandal (53.37%), gur (51.67%), salt powdered (40.97%) rice irri-6/9 (38.79%) and pulse mash (37.38%).

## Gold rates up by Rs.1,400 per tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs. 1,400 and was sold at Rs. 217,700 on Friday compared to its sale at Rs. 216,300 on the last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs. 1,201 to Rs. 186,643 from Rs. 185,442 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs. 171,089 from Rs. 169,989, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten gram Silver remained stagnant at Rs. 2,600 and 2,229.08 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$14 to \$2,074 from \$2,060, the Association reported.

## Fruits, vegetables prices raise by 25 to 30 percent

ISLAMABAD (APP): In the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, the prices of fruits and vegetables have increased by 25 to 30 per cent in the last two months.

According to the market survey conducted by APP here on Friday, the prices of vegetables and fruits, especially onions and tomatoes, peas, cabbage, apple gourd, garlic, ginger, beans, cucumber, carrots, and fruits including apples, pomegranates, bananas, citrus, and oranges, have increased by 25 to 30 per cent from the last two months. Since last week, various varieties of fruits, including apples, have been sold at Rs. 250 to Rs. 300, pomegranates at Rs. 300 to Rs. 350, bananas at Rs. 120 to Rs. 150, citrus at Rs. 200 to Rs. 250, and oranges at Rs. 250 to Rs. 300 per kilo/ dozen.

Similarly, among vegetables, peas cost Rs. 200 to 250, cucumbers Rs. 120 to 140, apple gourds Rs. 150 to 160,

onions Rs. 170 to 180, and garlic and ginger cost Rs. 540 to 580 rupees per kg. According to the survey, the price of poultry chicken reached Rs. 460 to 470 per kg, and the price of poultry eggs reached Rs. 420 to 430 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. The prices of poultry items have increased by 20 per cent in the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi during the last month, which has created huge volatility in the market.

During the last three months in the twin cities, a 25 per cent increase was witnessed in the price of poultry chicken, while there was a 35 per cent increase in the price of poultry eggs in the same period.

Meanwhile, talking to APP, the 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 industrialists and the ex-president of the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dr. Sarosh, said that soybeans are included in the basic ingredients of poultry feed.

Meanwhile, the buyers expressed their concern over the huge increase in the prices of food items and poultry. On the occasion, the buyer, Asif Ali, said that food and beverage prices have been increasing every day since last year, which is seriously affecting the purchasing power of the common man. A school teacher, Uzma Parveen, said that at present, the middle class is very worried about current inflation, and the administration should create a price control mechanism.

## Export of rice, frozen food from Pakistan to Malaysia improving: CG

KARACHI (APP): Consul General of Malaysia Herman Hardynata Bin Ahmad, said that Pakistan's share in bilateral trade was also improving as Malaysia has increased its purchases of rice and frozen food from Pakistan.

Though trade volume between the two countries was largely in Malaysia's favour, its exports to Pakistan mainly represent palm oil, he added while speaking at a meeting during his visit to the Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), said a statement issued here on Friday. "Malaysia is a small country and in terms of palm oil production, we are limited and unable to completely fulfil Pakistan's growing demand for palm oil even though we have been producing palm oil at our peak capacity," the CG said.

The Malaysian envoy appreciated KCCI for regularly holding meetings and maintaining excellent liaison with the Malaysian Consulate and also expressed keenness to get engaged with the business community of Karachi that was arranging meetings focused on strengthening bilateral trade and investment ties.

"Last year a Malaysian delegation came to Pakistan in September to explore new avenues of trade cooperation and I will try to bring more such delegations to Karachi this year as well", he added while appreciating the existing trade volume, especially the trade taking place from Karachi region.

He said that both countries have been cooperating not only in trade but also in Defense as Malaysia has been sending its defence officials for training in Pakistan and Pakistani officials from the armed forces were also being sent to Malaysia for training.

Enhanced trade, there are many other opportunities in the tourism sector and capacity building in many other sectors of the economy," Bin Ahmed noted.

Earlier, President KCCI Iftikhar Ahmed Sheikh, while welcoming the Malaysian CG, stated that Pakistan and Malaysia have strong and diversified bilateral economic relationships in various areas of mutual interest. "Despite strong brotherly ties, the bilateral trade volume between Pakistan and Malaysia remains below its true potential as Pakistani exports to Malaysia currently stand at around \$300 million in FY23 which need to be enhanced to a reasonable level," the KCCI chief observed and underscored the need to eliminate trade barriers, encourage ease of doing business and diversify products for economic cooperation.

Effective implementation of a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (FTA) establishing a closer economic partnership between Pakistan and Malaysia can substantially enhance trade volume between the two countries, he noted. "It is imperative for Pakistan to pursue economic integration with the ASEAN block having a collective GDP size of \$3.6 trillion. This will open new avenues for strengthening ties and establishing institutional connections with individual ASEAN members and the collective group," Sheikh opined.

He was of the view that SIFC and CPEC, being the powerful regional economic transformational tools to stimulate FDI, offer tremendous opportunities for Malaysian businesses to explore joint ventures and provide a robust avenue to strengthen and elevate economic relations between the two countries.

## Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Four ships namely, Navios Constellation, Eva Tokyo, Ullswater and Bi Jia Shan, carrying Containers, Chemicals, LPG and Coal, berthed at Container Terminal, Engro Terminal, Sui Southern Terminal and Bulk Terminal respectively on Thursday.

A total of nine ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two ships, Golden Curl and Eva Tokyo are left the port on today morning and another containers ship, Navios Constellation is expected to sail on same day. A cargo volume of 115,911 tonnes, comprising 70,354 tonnes imports cargo and 45,557 tonnes export cargo carried in 3,427 Containers (1,399 TEUs are Import and 2,028 TEUs are export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours. There are 03 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them two ships, Solar Alice and Borno carrying Edible oil and LNG are expected to take berths at LCT and PGPCl on Friday.

## The Frontier Post Classifieds

**TO ADVERTISE IN The Frontier Post**  
For Classified advertisements please contact  
Mobile: +92-334-1001900  
Email: shoab@thefrontierpost.com

## COURT NOTICES

**BUNER**  
IN the Court of Jauhar Ali Safi Civil Judge I /Alaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar.Suit No 549/1.Institution 18/10/2023. Date of hearing. 13/2/2024. Sher Mohamad VS Nadra etc. Notice to no 3.Asmatullah. 4.Kifayatullah sons of unknown. 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 13/2/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

**SWABI**  
In the court of Qurat-ul-Ain Rashid Senior Civil Judge/Judge Family Court Swabi, Mst. Adan Usman VS Muhammad Ghayas Suit number: 356/FC, Institution date: 02-11-2023 Hearing date: 22-02-2024 Subject: Dissolution of Marriage Notice to: (1) Muhammad Ghayas S/o Muhammad Riaz Khan R/o Islam Pura, Karnal Sher Kalay, Teh. Razar, Distt, Swabi, presently abroad. Defendant No.1 The service through ordinary means is difficult, so you are informed to attend the court on 22-02-2024 personally, through counsel or attorney to avoid ex-parte.

In the court of Sabeena Jadoon Civil Judge-V Swabi, Mst. Naseem Parwara VS Kishwar Khan Suit number: 152/1, Institution date: 30-09-2022 Hearing date: 05-03-2024 Subject: Proclamation Notice to: (1) Kishwar Khan S/o Fazal Qader R/o Shah Mansoor, presently 58 A- Grantham Road, Sparkbrook, Birmingham, B11, England. Tel. No. 07551885567(2) Mst. Niaz Parwara daughter Fazal Qader R/o Shah Mansoor, Teh. & Distt, Swabi. The service through ordinary means is difficult, so you

are informed to attend the court on 05-03-2024 personally, through counsel or attorney to avoid ex-parte proceeding.

## PUBLIC NOTICE

It is published through this notice that I Aftab Riaz S/o Riaz Khan R/o Shinwari Town Gulshan Abad Peshawar Road District Kohat (Present Address QATAR) is the owner of Plot no. 102 Sector A-2 Size 10, Marla Phase 2 KDA Kohat. Has appointed has Mr. Muhammad Yousof S/o Fazal Mehmood Qureshi R/o Peshawar Road near Ghazi Khan Pump Mohallah Gulshan Abad District Kohat Through (Special) Deed no. 52 Bahl no. 04, Volume no. 280 Dated 26/01/2024 which is Registered in the Office Kohat of Tehsilidar/Sub Registrar of the Attorney Holder now wants to Transfer the above said plot if any Bank/Institution /Firm /Person has any objection about the transfer. He should contact the Housing officer UADA within 15 days in writing with proofs other wise plot will be transfer and no objection will be accepted Project Director Urban Area KDA Kohat.





In brief

Lakers stun Celtics, Maxey scores 51

LOS ANGELES (AFP/APP): A Los Angeles Lakers team missing superstars LeBron James and Anthony Davis barreled past the NBA-leading Boston Celtics on Thursday as Tyrese Maxey scored 51 points to lead Philadelphia over Utah. Austin Reaves scored a season-high 32 points to lead the Lakers' in their 114-105 victory, saying afterward he and the rest of the Lakers had taken to heart James' blunt demand after Tuesday's loss to Atlanta that his teammates "just go out and do your job." "It's a great message," Reaves told broadcaster TNT. "And coming from the greatest player ever, in my opinion, that's what we should do." Elsewhere, 76ers guard Maxey and the Knicks' Jalen Brunson celebrated their first career All-Star selections with standout performances. Maxey scored a career-high 51 points to lead the Sixers to a hard-fought 127-124 victory over the Jazz in Utah, an uplifting end to a day that saw the 76ers tensely awaiting word on how long they'll be without injured star Joel Embiid.

USA grab control of Ukraine tie

PARIS (AFP/APP): Sebastian Korda and Davis Cup debutant Chris Eubanks won Thursday's singles matches as the United States moved 2-0 up against Ukraine in their qualifier in Lithuania. World number 33 Korda overcame the challenge of Oleksii Krutykh, a player ranked 309 places beneath the American, to earn a battling 6-3, 6-7 (3/7), 6-4 victory in the opening rubber. Eubanks stepped in for the injured Taylor Fritz and beat 498th-ranked Viacheslav Bielinskyi 6-3, 6-2 to leave the record 32-time winners in sight of the September finals featuring 16 teams. "All day since I found out I was playing I was really nervous," said Eubanks. "Representing your country means a lot more than just playing for yourself. I had a lot of guys I didn't want to let down. Nerves were pretty strong at the beginning but once I got on court I settled down nicely and played pretty well."

Inter-College Cricket,

PESHAWAR (APP): Islamia College won the Inter-Collegiate cricket tournament under the auspices of Peshawar Education Board by a huge margin of 105 runs here on Friday. Islamia College defeated PEF College in the final by a huge margin. Islamia College while batting first scored 181 runs in the allotted 20 overs while playing first. Zulqifal Shinwari played a brilliant and charming innings and stood out with 75 runs. His innings included four sixes. Farhan Khan made 68 and Sanaullah made 25 with Sahil dismissed three players from PEF. Uzair of Islamia College scored three wickets. Mughaz three and Owais one wicket and thus Islamia College won the match by 105 runs. On this occasion, Peshawar Board Chairman Prof. Nasirullah Khan was the guest. Speaking on this occasion, Professor Nsrullah appreciated the Islamia College team for their outstanding performance throughout the tournament and played key matches by reaching the final and now secured the title after defeating PEF College by 105 runs.

# The Saga begins with the sale of tickets



Shahid Afridi

The ticket sales for the most awaited ICC T20 World Cup 2024 has commenced. The exciting match between Pakistan and India is scheduled for June 9 in New York with premium ticket priced at \$400, Standard Plus at \$350, and the minimum ticket cost is said to be \$175. According to the International Cricket Council (ICC), fans can apply for a maximum of 6 tickets. Ticket applications will be processed through ballot, and the ticket ballot will continue until February 7. After the completion of the ballot, successful applicants will be

notified, and the link for payment will be sent.

The ICC T20 World Cup matches are scheduled to begin ticket sales on February 7, with a minimum ticket price of \$6. However, more than 260,000 tickets will be available for sale overall.

After the completion of the ballot, cricket enthusiasts will be informed, and the payment link for the designated tickets will be sent. Additionally, tickets for the remaining matches of the T20 World Cup will be available for sale again on February 22.

It's worth noting that in the first round of the ICC T20 World Cup 2024,

Pakistan will play its four matches at various venues in the United States.

The much-anticipated match against traditional rival India will take place on June 9 in New York. The schedule indicates Pakistan's first match on June 6 against the United States at Grand Prairie Stadium, Dallas. The second match against India will be on June 9 at Nassau County International Cricket Stadium, New York. Similarly, the third match against Canada will be on June 11 at Nassau County International Cricket Stadium, New York, and the fourth match against Ireland will be on June 16 at Central Broward Regional Park Stadium, Lauderhill.

Cricket enthusiasts are eagerly waiting for the matches, as this marks the first time that Cricket World Cup is being held in the United States. American spectators will enjoy to see the exciting matches, including traditional rivalries like Pakistan vs India, and other matches featuring their favorite cricket players in action on American soil.

## Smith, Green guide Australia to crushing eight-wicket win over West Indies

MELBOURNE (AFP/APP): Skipper Steve Smith and Cameron Green eased Australia to a crushing eight-wicket victory over the West Indies with a dominant 149-run stand in the first one-day international in Melbourne on Friday.

Smith finished unbeaten on 79 off 79 balls and Green, batting at number three, was 77 not out from 104 balls as Australia cruised to the winning target of 232 with 11.3 overs to spare. Opener Josh Inglis set up the platform with a pulsating 65 off 43 balls, including 10 fours and a six. It was Australia's 10th consecutive ODI win, including their World Cup victory in India last year, and the pressure will be on the West Indies to prevent a series clean sweep.

It was all too easy for Australia, with Travis Head the only batting failure with four off five balls.

Debutant Australian paceman Xavier Bartlett was named the man of the

match with 4-17 off nine overs, initiated by a wicket with only his third delivery.

Green raised his half-century off 62 balls, with Smith's 50 coming off 58 balls. Inglis's fifty was powered off just 28 balls after plundering three boundaries off Matthew Forde's fourth over and swatting a huge six off Oshane Thomas over deep square leg. But Inglis was out attempting to reverse-sweep Gudakesh Motie only to lob a catch to slip. When he departed Australia were 83 for two and in the box seat in the 12th over.

Earlier, Keacy Carty was denied a century in the West Indies innings in a run out mix-up. He looked primed for his maiden ODI century before he was badly burnt by his batting partner Hayden Walsh and was run out for 88 off 108 balls. Bartlett, playing in his first ODI along with fellow paceman Lance Morris (0-59), had a dream start, taking the top of

Justin Greaves's off-stump with a big inswinger for one and picked up Alick Athanaze in his following over, caught behind for five.

Bartlett had the ball swinging appreciably and claimed the big wicket of skipper Shai Hope, caught at first slip by Matthew Short for 12, leaving him with 3-8 in five overs.

Leg-spinner Adam Zampa broke a flourishing 110-run partnership when Roston Chase attempted to sweep and was bowled for 59 off 67 balls.

Carty was closing in on his century before he was needlessly run out by a poor call from Walsh.

Walsh set off for an injudicious single and Sean Abbott at mid-off threw down the stumps with Carty well out of his ground. He left the ground visibly annoyed, 12 short of his hundred.

The second ODI takes place at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Sunday.

## Coste 'proud' to carry Olympic torch 76 years after winning gold

BOISCOLOMBES (AFP/APP): When the Olympic torch relay gets underway in France in May keep an eye open for Charles Coste, France's oldest living Olympic champion.

Coste, who will turn 100 on February 8, pedalled his way to glory in the men's team cycling pursuit 76 years ago in the 1948 Olympics in London. He has bad knees these days but is hoping to do his bit for Paris 2024.

"It will be unforgettable and I'm very proud," Coste told AFP.

"Now I have to prepare myself physically. I'm handicapped by my knees but I'm going to try to carry the flame for a few metres."

Coste also plans to watch the cycling in Paris but if that still lies some months in the future, London '48 remains clearly imprinted on his memory.

"They weren't the grandiose Games of today," says Coste, who is some way from being the oldest living Olympic champion.

That honour currently rests with Hungarian gymnast Agnes Keleti who turned 103 on January 9.

"There were hardly any radios. We only arrived three days before our event."

"England was still traumatised by the war. London had been badly bombed and

we were billeted in a US Air Force training camp. There was no Olympic village. Each discipline was housed separately so we didn't mix much with the other athletes."

Coste was 23 at the time and, as France's pursuit champion of 1947, was appointed captain of the team that included Serge Blusson, Pierre Adam and Fernand Decanali, none of whom remains to accompany Coste on the torch relay.

"Crowning glory" - "We raced several times on the London track to get to know it well," said Coste. "I was with my mates Blusson, Adam and Decanali. We made up a very strong, close-knit team."

"First we had to beat the English, who were the favourites in front of their home crowd."

"Then, in the final, I got off to a bit of a slow start but we picked up our speed after that and the Italians finally gave up."

"When we got the medal, it was the crowning glory. It was our dream and we'd just made it come true. "My mother used to say that when I was 10 or 12, I would tell her I would be a General or an Olympic champion."

The cyclists were awarded their medals - "in a box, not around your neck like

today" - and a bouquet of flowers. But organisational problems at the Herne Hill Velodrome meant there was the disappointment of not having an anthem.

"There won't be a 'Marseillaise' they said 'because we can't find the record!'," says Coste.

Two years ago, Coste finally got his Marseillaise when he was rather belatedly given the Legion d'Honneur.

"I would have liked General de Gaulle to have given it to me in 1952 but no one thought of me at the time," says Coste who went professional a year later, going on to compete twice in the Tour de France and win the 1949 Grand Prix des Nations time trial.

"As I was the only Olympic champion who didn't have the medal, it was given to me in 2022 and I chose Tony Estanguet to do it."

"I'm very grateful to him. He gave me a beautiful Marseillaise. It was a great honour for me. Tony Estanguet and I have become friends. We write to each other and he calls me from time to time."

One of those calls from Estanguet, chief of the Paris Games organising committee, was the invitation to carry the torch and pass it on to a new generation of Olympians.



COLOMBO: Vishwa Fernando celebrates a wicket with Dhananjaya de Silva.

## Indian captain impressed with Pakistan's hospitality as Davis Cup tie commences Saturday

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indian team non-playing captain for the Davis Cup World Group I Play-Off against Pakistan, Zeeshan Ali on Friday said his side received a very warm welcome and hospitality in Pakistan since their arrival in Islamabad.

"There were certain concerns before coming here but from the moment we landed, we received great hospitality and warm welcome in Pakistan. We have been very well taken care of since we arrived," he said in a pre-event press conference held here at a local hotel.

Speaking about the contest, taking place on Saturday and Sunday at the grass courts of Pakistan Sports Complex Islamabad, he said that India had won the last tie against Pakistan, held in Kazakhstan. This would be a new contest. "Our job is to come and play tennis. Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF) has made the best arrangements. We are also hoping to visit the city (Islamabad) soon. There should be a bilateral tennis series between Pakistan and India," he said.

Meanwhile, Pakistani ace tennis player Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi said it would be a tough competition against India but Pakistan were a good side in their own conditions and capable of beating any team.

"All teams that came here in the past for Davis Cup tie were stronger than us but we prevailed against them. Though Indian team play well on grass courts, I believe we will have a slight edge against them," added the seasoned player, who will also be playing in the singles competition in the Davis Cup.

"We are fully focused on the tie and are looking forward to emerge victorious," he said. To a question, he said politics should not be involved in sports. "Our cricket team visited India. Now, the Indian tennis team is in Pakistan for the Davis Cup."

"I hope the Indian cricket team will also come to Pakistan to play the Champions Trophy", he said adding that Pakistan sent a message of peace when its team toured India for the Cricket World Cup.

Pakistan's tennis veteran Aqeel

Khan said Pakistan players had undergone rigorous training for the event and were eager to perform. "We hope to see some good competitions. The recent rain spell affected our practice but we managed to cover that to a large extent."

Captain Mohammad Abid said his side's preparation for the competition was complete and they would try to deliver their best.

As per the draws after the presser, the singles competitions include Aisam vs Ramkumar Ramanathan and Aqeel vs Sriram Balaji, to be held on Saturday. While doubles will take place on Sunday wherein Pakistan's Muzammil Murtaza and Barkatullah will lock horns with Yuki Bhambri Saketh Myneni. The doubles will be followed by two other singles on the same day where Aqeel will take on Rajkumar and Aisam will be vying against Sriram. The Indian squad, comprising five players and as many support staff arrived in Islamabad on late Sunday for the all-important tie. The Indian Davis Cup team is visiting Pakistan first time after 1964.

### OSA Greens gets third consecutive win of tournament

BAHAWALPUR (APP): OSA Greens and OSA Whites won their matches convincingly on the 5th match day of the OSA Platinum Jubilee Cricket Tournament. In the first match, OSA Reds scored 144 runs in the allotted 20 overs. Captain of OSA Greens Muhammad Ali Zamir took 3 wickets. In reply, OSA Greens chased the target in 11 overs without losing any wickets. OSA Greens openers Hasan Riaz Bodla and Ammar Cheema scored unbeaten 50s.

Bodla was awarded Man of the Match for 50 and taking one wicket. In the second match, OSA Blues outclassed OSA Whites. Batting first, OSA Blues got all out after scoring 111 runs. OSA Whites chased the target in 12 overs for the loss of one wicket. The semifinals of the tournament will be played between OSA Reds and OSA Blues; and OSA Greens and OSA Whites.

## Four institutes enter semi-finals of inter-varsity badminton championship

KARACHI (APP): Under the auspices of Higher Education Commission, Pakistan, (HEC) Iqra University, Karachi is conducting 46th All Pakistan Inter-varsity Badminton (Women) Championship 2023 - 2024 at DOW University Health Sciences from February 1 to 3.

The chief guest of the opening ceremony, Professor Dr. Farhan Essa - CEO of Dr. Essa Laboratory & Diagnostic Center appreciated the efforts of the organizers to encourage the mission of women empowerment. He said that such events were crucial in the country and the event a positive step towards the cause.

He further said that today's initiative is not only an encouragement to the women Javed Ali Memon, from HEC in his welcome message highlighted that many milestones that were achieved to revive uni-

versity sports in a short period. "There is no shortage of talent in Pakistan, the need is to provide the right opportunities to the youth", he added. He maintained that HEC would continue to engage youth in healthy and productive activities to inculcate sportsmanship.

The ceremony was attended by 120 players and officials from 25 universities from all over the country along with sports dignitaries/prominent figures of sports including guest of honor Najiba Alvi - Pakistan Cricketer, Muhammad Ali Rajput, Secretary Sindh Olympic Association, M. Khalid Rehmani, President Karachi Tennis Association and Syeda Mushayyaddah Zahid - Sr. Director of Physical Education.

In the opening day of the 1st round team event matches University of Punjab defeated LUMS Jamshoro by 2-0,

University of Karachi beat Zia Ud Din University by 2-0, IBA Karachi beat GC University Lahore by 2-1. Round 2 matches will be played tomorrow between University of Punjab and Lahore College for Women University Lahore, University of Karachi and Institute of Business Administration, Karachi. The singles individual matches round will also take place on Saturday.

In continuation of the day 2 of 46th All Pakistan HEC Badminton Women Championship 2023 - 2024, Punjab University beat Lahore College for Women University, Lahore by 2-0, Kinnaird College for Women beat University of Sargodha by 2-0, University of Karachi beat Institute of Business Administration Karachi by 2-0 whereas Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan beat FC Christian University Lahore by 2-0.

## Resistance exercise vital for muscle performance of Athletes: Nasrullah

PESHAWAR (APP): Physical training alters the appearance of skeletal muscles and can produce changes in muscle performance with resistance exercises vital for boosting up the performance of muscle for any of the game. This was stated by International Course Conductor of the Pakistan Sports Board Rana Nasrullah on the second-day of the five day PSB Coaching and Training Course being continued here at PSB Coaching Center with more than 80 participants from all across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) taking part.

He urged the coaches to know about resistance exercise with different cycles including Micro Cycle consisting of 7-10 days, Miso Cycle which lasts six to eight weeks and Macro Cycle to be adopted for six months to a year.

"Contrariwise, a lack of use can result in decreased performance and muscle appearance, he said. Although muscle cells can change in size, new cells are not formed when muscles grow. Instead, structural proteins are added to muscle fibers in a process called hypertrophy, so cell diameter increases," he said.

"The reverse, when structural proteins are lost and muscle mass decreases, is called atrophy. Age-related muscle atrophy is called sarcopenia and Cellular components of muscles can also undergo changes in response to changes in muscle use," he said. "Slow fibers are predominantly used in endurance exercises that require little force but involve numerous repetitions."

The aerobic metabolism used by slow-twitch fibers allows them to maintain contractions over long periods," he said.

"Endurance training modifies these slow fibers to make them even more efficient by producing more mitochondria to enable more aerobic metabolism and more ATP production. Likewise, endurance exercise can also increase the amount of myoglobin in a cell, as increased aerobic respiration increases the need for oxygen. Myoglobin is found in the sarcoplasm and acts as an oxygen storage supply for the mitochondria."

"The training can trigger the formation of more extensive capillary networks around the fiber, a process called angiogenesis, to supply oxygen

and remove metabolic waste. To allow these capillary networks to supply the deep portions of the muscle, muscle mass does not greatly increase in order to maintain a smaller area for the diffusion of nutrients and gases," Rana Nasrullah said.

"All of these cellular changes result in the ability to sustain low levels of muscle contractions for greater periods without fatiguing. The proportion of SO muscle fibers in muscle determines the suitability of that muscle for endurance, and may benefit those participating in endurance activities," he said.

"There are seven powerful ways to improve athletic performance. Improving athletic performance is easier than it's ever been, he added."

With recent innovations in technology and training methodology, athletes are doing things we never thought were possible," he said.

The steps include workouts, Track & measure performance during training, Make proper hydration a priority, Dedicate enough time for recovery, Train your brain, Fuel your body the right way, Consider adding some supplements to your diet.





## In brief

### Police seize huge cache of arms

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi police have foiled a bid to smuggle a huge quantity of weapons and arrested two culprits during an operation here on Friday. According to a police spokesman, Westridge police managed to recover a huge cache of arms being smuggled in a private vehicle by the smugglers. The CPO Khalid Hamdani said the Westridge police party set up a special picket and stopped a suspected vehicle. He said that the two suspects identified as Bahadur Khan and Rashid Shah were apprehended whereas more than 35 pistols and thousands of bullets were recovered from the possession of the arms smuggler. A case has been registered against the suspects while further investigation is underway.

### Intizar Hussain remembered

ISLAMABAD (APP): Eighth death anniversary of renowned Urdu writer Intizar Hussain was observed on Friday. Born in India in 1925, Intizar Hussain gained wide recognition through his novels, short stories, poetry and nonfiction. He received several national and international awards including Sitara-e-Imtiaz from the government of Pakistan. He died this day at Lahore in 2016.

### Rain-wind thunderstorm

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecast rain-wind/thunderstorm with snowfall over mountains for most parts of the country during the next 24 hours. Isolated heavy falls/snowfall is likely in Balochistan during the period. Heavy rainfall may cause flash flooding in local nullah's of Barkhan, Kohlu, Sibbi, Naseerabad, Dalbandin and Khuzdar on 2nd and 3rd of February. According to the synoptic situation, a westerly wave is affecting Balochistan and Sindh and is likely to approach upper parts from tonight. During the last 24 hours, cloudy weather prevailed over southern and central parts of the country while rain-thunderstorm with snow over mountains occurred in Balochistan and lower Sindh. The rainfall recorded was Balochistan: Turbat, Khuzdar 07mm, Kalat 05, Panjgur, Lasbela 01, Sindh: Larkana 02, Hyderabad, Karachi 01mm. The snowfall recorded was 0.4 inches in Astore. The lowest minimum temperatures recorded were Kalam -14C, Leh -12, Malam Jabba, Astore -07, Gupis -05, Skardu and Rawalakot -04C.

### Cleanliness activities despite severe cold

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) Rana Sajid Safdar on Friday said that the cleanliness drive was in full swing despite severe cold weather while heavy machinery and excavators were being used in the Murree area to remove snow and rubbish from the roads. Talking to media persons, he said that the RWMC was making all-out efforts to keep the hill station clear for tourists. He said that as a large number of tourists visited Murree on the eve of the snowfall that increased the responsibility of RWMC staff. He said that additional staff had been deputed at all choking points to ensure smooth water drainage to provide maximum facilities to the tourists. Rana said that RWMC continued cleaning duties in Murree, and salt was sprinkled on the roads to ensure a smooth traffic flow.



ISLAMABAD: Deputy Head of Mission France, Guillaume Dabouis visits the 'Burgeoning Icons Exhibition' at Gallery 6.

## Finally countdown for general polls begins, political campaigns gaining momentum

ISLAMABAD (APP): As final countdown begins for forthcoming general polls to held on February 8, preparations have gained momentum across country where most of the National and provincial assembly candidates have intensified their campaigns.

In various cities corner meetings, political camps and rallies have become a routine matter, said a report aired by PTV news.

Portraits and stickers of different political leaders including Nawaz Sharif, Shahbaz Sharif, Benazir Bhutto, Imran Khan, Sheikh Rashid, Hanif Abbasi and others could easily be noticed on rickshaws, wagons, Suzuki pickups, cars, walls and private buses, said a citizen of Rawalpindi.

The enthusiasm of candidates and their support-

ers has reached the peak, said another citizen.

While negotiations for seat to seat adjustments between various political parties are going on, it is widely believed that in fact the contest would be between the allies of the government and the opposition parties, said a Politician.

The election campaign is getting momentum with every passing day as banners and posters of political parties could be seen everywhere, besides on traffic signboards on the roads, said a motorist.

The printing and selling of election-related items, has also picked up, with wholesalers and vendors concerned over high demand of sales.

"Many candidates are also turning to the social media to run their election

campaign which also cuts demand for the offset printing material," said a social media user.

Meanwhile, business activities relating to printing of election material have witnessed a boom ahead of Pakistan's general elections, claimed a printing press worker.

The printing press owners said that they have already got a lot of orders from the supporters of election candidates and workers of various political parties.

The voters and supporters of various candidates also started displaying e posters in front of election offices of the candidates and on rear windscreens of motor vehicles to support for the candidates, said a political leader.

Similarly, the demand for flags also increased in the city, he added.

### Information Secretary for sensitizing youth about Kashmir issue

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Secretary for Information and Broadcasting Shaheera Shahid on Friday underlined the need for educating the current and coming generations about historical facts regarding Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IloJK).

"It is our national obligation to sensitize our young generation about Kashmir as well as the current situation there," the secretary said while addressing the inaugural ceremony of the Digital Photography and Painting Exhibition here at Information Service Academy, The Directorate of Electronic Media and Public organized the exhibition in connection with the Kashmir Solidarity Day. The secretary said India abrogated the Articles 370 and 35A of Indian constitution for turning Muslim majority in IloJK into minority. India would not be able to achieve its nefarious designs in IloJK, she added.

39th MCMC officers visit IPO- Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): A delegation of the National Institute of Management (NIM) consisting of 15 officers of the Mid-Career Management Course (MCMC) visited the Intellectual Property Organization (IPO) headquarters in Islamabad.

The Chair of IPO-Pakistan, Ambassador (R) Farukh Amil, provided a detailed briefing to the delegation about the working of the organization, including intellectual property rights, administrative structure, legal framework, progress, major issues, and challenges, said a press release issued here on Friday. The delegation also received information about innovation, business, IP rights, trademarks, copyrights, patent inventions, PCT, technological innovation, and Geographical Indications. The visit was aimed at enlightening the officers about the various aspects of intellectual property and the functioning of IPO-Pakistan. The visit was part of the officers' training and exposure to different organizations and institutions.

ISLAMABAD (APP): Inspector General of National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP), Salman Chaudhry on Friday directed the zonal and sector commanders to conduct surprise checking and monitoring to ensure implementation of the axle load control regime.

A high-level meeting was chaired by the Inspector General NHMP here in order to control goods overloading, strict implementation should be ensured, especially tyre pressure gauge checking, said a news release. Salman Chaudhry emphasized the importance of preventing overloaded vehicles from using motorways and highways, adding that overloaded vehicles contribute to road accidents and cause of damages the road infrastructure. He further said the NHMP committed to the complete elimination of overloading from the National Highways of the country for which all resources will be utilized.

A strict warning has been given to all the major goods suppliers of the country, markets, cement manufacturing plants and goods transport companies, informing them in detail about the damages of overloading. It was informed in the meeting that extra goods are being offloaded from overloaded vehicles under the supervision of the National Highways and Motorway Police at all the Weigh Stations established on National Highways and furthermore, thousands of overloaded vehicles are also being returned with heavy fines.

ANF recovers 36 kg drugs in eight operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting eight operations across the country managed to recover over 36 kg drugs and arrested seven accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Friday.

He informed that 6 kg heroin was recovered from a parcel being sent to UK from a cargo office at Lahore Airport while an accused was also arrested.

In second operation, 1 kg Ice drug was recovered from a Bahrain-bound passenger netted at Faisalabad Airport.

750 grams hashish and 448 grams Ice were recovered from a passenger going to

## Mushahid stresses 'healing touch' for national stability

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman of the Senate's Standing Committee on Defence Mushahid Hussain Sayed on Friday underscored the urgent need for a "healing touch" in the country.

Talking to a private news channel, he emphasized the critical role of national unity and urged political leaders to act responsibly to foster stability in the country. Mushahid remarked that the political parties had been transformed into "family

business franchises".

He called for learning lessons from the past, cautioning against turning political rivalries into personal enmities.

Addressing the root causes of political instability, he pointed out that politicians had not set rules of the game among themselves. Mushahid said the nation was facing challenges, including political, economic, and security concerns, which could be overcome through concerted efforts.

## Kazakhstan invited to benefit from SIFC framework, says Pak envoy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's ambassador to Kazakhstan Nauman Bashir Bhatti on Friday said Kazakhstan had been invited to benefit from the favorable investment opportunities being offered by Pakistan under the framework of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC). "I must highlight that Pakistan has established a SIFC and has opened priority sectors for investments. We have invited Kazakhstan to benefit from the favorable investment opportunities offered under the SIFC framework," he said in response to a question in an interview with 'Kazinform,' an international news agency.

Highlighting Pakistan's strategic location, the envoy mentioned that his country also provided the shortest route for Kazakhstan's access to the Arabian Sea. "Pakistan remains keen to strengthen its connectivity with Kazakhstan in multiple ways and through multiple channels. The two sides are already working towards this end."

In response to another question, he agreed that the shortest and cheapest route for connectivity and transportation of goods between Pakistan and Kazakhstan was through China and Kyrgyzstan using the Karakoram Highway.

"It is also known as the Quadrilateral Traffic in Transit Agreement between Pakistan, China, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan or the QTTA Route. Goods can be transported through this route on trucks and containers directly from Karachi, Pakistan, to Almaty, Kazakhstan,

and back, without the need to change trucks." Ambassador Nauman mentioned it was the safest, most reliable, and economical route. However, currently, the route cannot be kept operational due to the closure of the Khunjerab Pass for four months in winter.

Recently, he said Pakistan and China had agreed to make efforts to keep the Karakoram Highway, a component of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), operational throughout the year. "It will not only boost Pakistan's connectivity with China but also with Kazakhstan. Therefore, we need to work towards making the QTTA more effective." The envoy also discussed the Afghanistan-Uzbekistan route, stating that the full realization of the Intra Afghan Rail Network would significantly boost connectivity between the two countries through a rail network.

In response to another question, he mentioned that trade between Pakistan and Kazakhstan had continued to increase, albeit gradually, but it was still far from its true potential. "It can be significantly increased." Recently, the ambassador said, with an improved political and security situation in Afghanistan and the commencement of operations by Pakistan's National Logistics Company for the transportation of goods to Kazakhstan via Afghanistan and China, "we witnessed a significant surge in our bilateral trade volume between July and November 2023."

## IG NH&MP directs to ensure implementation of axle load control regime

ISLAMABAD (APP): Inspector General of National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP), Salman Chaudhry on Friday directed the zonal and sector commanders to conduct surprise checking and monitoring to ensure implementation of the axle load control regime.

A high-level meeting was chaired by the Inspector General NHMP here in order to control goods overloading, strict implementation should be ensured, especially tyre pressure gauge checking, said a news release. Salman Chaudhry emphasized the importance of preventing overloaded vehicles from using motorways and highways, adding that overloaded vehicles contribute to road accidents and cause of damages the road infrastructure. He further said the NHMP committed to the complete elimination of overloading from the National Highways of the country for which all resources will be utilized.

A strict warning has been given to all the major goods suppliers of the country, markets, cement manufacturing plants and goods transport companies, informing them in detail about the damages of overloading. It was informed in the meeting that extra goods are being offloaded from overloaded vehicles under the supervision of the National Highways and Motorway Police at all the Weigh Stations established on National Highways and furthermore, thousands of overloaded vehicles are also being returned with heavy fines.

## ANF recovers 36 kg drugs in eight operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting eight operations across the country managed to recover over 36 kg drugs and arrested seven accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Friday.

He informed that 6 kg heroin was recovered from a parcel being sent to UK from a cargo office at Lahore Airport while an accused was also arrested.

In second operation, 1 kg Ice drug was recovered from a Bahrain-bound passenger netted at Faisalabad Airport.

750 grams hashish and 448 grams Ice were recovered from a passenger going to

Qatar at Islamabad Airport. 83 heroin-filled capsules were recovered from a passenger going to Dubai at Lahore Airport.

950 grams Ice was recovered from a passenger going to Sharjah at Multan Airport. 26 kg hashish was recovered from an accused rounded up near Ring Road Peshawar while 684 grams Ice was recovered from Nadra Chowk Torkham area.

600 grams hashish was recovered from an accused nabbed in Dera Ismail Khan.

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

## Mandatory Hajj ritual training to begin on February 12

ISLAMABAD (APP): The first phase of mandatory Hajj ritual training for intending pilgrims of the Government Scheme will commence on February 12 in seven Hajj camps located nationwide.

A spokesman of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony said in a statement that over 69,000 government scheme pilgrims will undergo training in two phases in various districts of the country.

The second training phase would be started after the holy month of Ramadan. Details of the training schedule will be communicated to the successful intending pilgrims through mobile messages and the Hajj app. Hajj pilgrims will attend training workshops at their convenient local venues.

The spokesman said the chief hajj trainer while addressing the ministry's 90 officers and official's training workshop, said that special attention in training has been given to Hajj rituals as well

as discipline and administrative issues.

The training curriculum has already been finalized by Ahmed Nadeem Khan, Joint Secretary Administration of the Ministry, along with Director General Syed Mushahid Hussain Khalid and Chief Trainer Nasir Aziz Khan.

Hajj training will be conducted across seven Hajj camps situated in various districts.

Quoting the trainers, the spokesman said the new extensive training program will cover the 'Pak Hajj' mobile app, guidance for Hajj preparations, understanding rituals, addressing challenges during Hajj, and providing general instructions.

The chief trainer mentioned that model tents resembling Mina Valley style have been set up in the training centres. Pilgrims will receive guidance from Master Trainers using 3D videos and interactive question-and-answer sessions.



ISLAMABAD: A skilled person paints the wall of 7th Avenue underpass near Aabpara Market.



Two suspects lashed in Kabul

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Taliban's court has announced that two individuals have been lashed for the charge of "extramarital relations." The court disclosed that the primary court confirmed the harsh penalty on Thursday, February 1st, through a public statement. The Supreme Court of the Taliban added that in addition to 35 lashes, each of these two individuals has also been sentenced to six months in prison.

1,100 drug factories demolished

KABUL (TOLOnews): The deputy minister of Counter Narcotics, Abdul Haq Hamkar, said that at least 1,100 drug factories have been demolished since the return of the Islamic Emirate to power. In an interview with TOLOnews, Hamkar said that over 20,000 counternarcotics raids happened, in which more than 13,000 people have been arrested within the same period. "Around 20,700 operations have been conducted, in which 13,700 people have been arrested and introduced to the Supreme Court," he said.

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

## US dismisses reports of reopening American consulate in Kabul



KABUL (Khaama Press): The US Embassy for Afghanistan in Doha has denied reports about the reopening of its consulate in Afghanistan. The US mission to Afghanistan in Doha, also known as the Afghanistan affairs unit told Khaama Press that the United States' position towards Afghanistan remains unchanged, and there are no immediate plans to resume diplomatic mission in Kabul.

"To be clear, the State Department's position has

not changed and we have no near-term plans to return any diplomatic functions to Kabul," said a State Department spokesperson.

Previously, the voice of America reported that the United States is "cautiously" exploring the possibility of reopening its consulate in Afghanistan under the control of the Taliban, without officially recognizing the group. This development has been mentioned in a new strategic document of the U.S.

Department of State. The report suggests that this move signifies a potential shift in America's policy towards engaging with the Taliban to achieve various security, political, and economic objectives.

However, the U.S. Embassy in Doha emphasized that there has been no change in the United States policy towards Afghanistan under Taliban control. Additionally, the document emphasizes strong support for the U.S.

Special Envoy for Hostage Affairs in their efforts to secure the release of American hostages detained in Afghanistan.

The report also underscores the United States' dedication to discussing the fundamental rights of the Afghan people, particularly those of women and girls. Since the fall of the previous government and the Taliban's takeover, the U.S. embassy in Afghanistan has been closed, operating with its staff in Doha.

## WHO praises Japan's ongoing healthcare aid to Afghanistan



KABUL (Khaama Press): The World Health Organization (WHO) welcomed the sustainable aid provided by the Japanese government in the healthcare sector for Afghanistan during a visit by a Japanese delegation to the Afghan-Japan hospital. Wednesday, the World Health Organization shared on its social media platform X that the visit of this delegation further

strengthens the collaboration between the Japanese government and WHO in Afghanistan.

Japan had previously announced its commitment to supporting Afghanistan by providing \$6.9 million in collaboration with the World Health Organization to enhance Afghanistan's capacity to respond to infectious diseases. Japan is considered

one of the significant contributors to aid efforts in Afghanistan. Following the resurgence of the current regime of the Taliban, Japan extended substantial assistance to various sectors, including earthquake victims, in Afghanistan. The recent political changes in Afghanistan have left the nation in a state of uncertainty, com-

pounding the already dire humanitarian crisis. Afghanistan is facing a bleak future due to a series of challenging events, including the devastating Herat earthquake on October 7, 2023. The forced expulsion of Afghan migrants from Pakistan during a severe humanitarian crisis and harsh winter has added to the country's woes.

## ‘Expelled Afghan migrants from Pakistan borrow money to survive’

KABUL (Khaama Press): The World Food Program (WFP) has recently announced that Afghan returnees forcibly expelled from Pakistan are currently borrowing money just to survive.

The organization revealed this on Thursday, February 1st, by releasing a video clip, stating that over half a million Afghan migrants have been

forcibly deported by the Pakistani government in nearly five months.

The agency added that Afghan migrants are now forced to borrow money just to survive, without any facilities or support.

The organization's website states that currently almost all expelled migrants are in a state of confusion. The World Food Program has stated

that some of these returning migrants are still hungry and, more than anything else, they need food assistance.

This comes as the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations of the Taliban of Afghanistan announced yesterday that the Japanese ambassador has reported 100 million yen in assistance for various sectors to support

returning migrants in Afghanistan.

The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations of the Taliban in Afghanistan, citing the Japanese ambassador in Kabul, emphasized that this money will be used for shelter, tents, winter clothing packages, and health sectors for Afghan migrants.



## US inspector warns Congress; ISIS threats resurge in Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) has issued a report to the United States Congress, raising concerns about the resurgence of Al-Qaeda threats in Afghanistan. In this report, the inspector stated that the Al-Qaeda leader, likely located in Afghanistan, has issued statements demanding attacks on U.S., European, and Israeli embassies and buildings.

The inspector presented his quarterly report to the U.S. Congress on Thursday, February 1st underscoring the security landscape in the country. Within this report, the inspector detailed America's aid levels to Afghanistan after the Taliban's takeover, as well as the economic situation and human rights conditions in Afghanistan under Taliban control.

The U.S. special inspector's report mentioned that following the conflict between Israel and Hamas, the Al-Qaeda leader based in Afghanistan released three press statements, in which he called for attacks on U.S., European, and Israeli embassies and buildings. According to the report, a sanctions monitoring team had previously reported that Al-Qaeda and the Taliban still maintain close ties, with the Taliban providing support to this group. The inspector's report also highlighted an increase in ISIS



attacks on Hazaras and Shia communities in Afghanistan and stated that terrorist threats in Afghanistan have continued over the past three months. Earlier, the United Nations Security Council had disclosed in a recent report that the Taliban maintains its relations with Al-Qaeda, and the Al-Qaeda organization has established eight new training camps in Afghanistan.

These four Al-Qaeda camps have been created in the provinces of Ghazni, Logar, Paktia, and Zabul, and the organization has set up an arms depot in Panjshir. Zabihullah Mujahid, the Taliban's spokesperson, rejected the new information from the

United Nations Security Council regarding Al-Qaeda's presence in Afghanistan and called it a "systematic plan" for spreading accusations and rumours against the Taliban.

Previously, the American magazine Long War Journal had reported that some members of the Al-Qaeda network work as key managers within the Taliban administration.

According to this report, the deputy head of the Taliban's intelligence department, the director of education for the group's defense ministry, and Taliban governors in Kapisa and Nuristan are among the Al-Qaeda members working in the Taliban administration.

## ‘Ban on political activities, women work, education upsets people’

KABUL (Pajhwok): Former Finance Minister Hazrat Umar Zakhelwal has said that former President Ashraf Ghani refused reconciliation to make sure he remained in power and asked the incumbent government to allow other Afghans in the government structure and accept the demands of people.

During an exclusive interview with Pajhwok Afghan News, Umar said the current government should allow political activities and remove restriction on girls' education in the country.

He said at the moment it was little difficult that the international community recognize the incumbent government as the legitimate Afghan government.

Referring to the Afghan peace process and the role of US Chief Negotiator Zalmay Khalilzad, he said that Khalilzad made some mistakes but it was unfair that he should be blamed for everything.

"Khalilzad did not spoil the opportunities, unfortunately former President Ashraf Ghani and a particular group of people around him who had problem with the peace or wanted to remain in power should be blamed for derailing chances of peace," he said.

These people did not want peace at the cost of the power they had, if the transfer of power did not happen peacefully there was the possibility of bloody war.

The former finance minister said that he supported the transfer of power through talks, adding that if it happened now the government

would have had international legitimacy and people would not flee the country.

"When the system collapsed, the situation could have been much worse, there could have been incidents of revenge, but fortunately it did not happen, the atmosphere would have been tense, I know that our sisters have complains, schools were closed and there is no work opportunities, I hope that situation would change, it also possible that situation would have been worse than what we had experienced, our diplomatic relationship with the world disconnected but Afghanistan remained connected with the world, people go and come, foreigners and UN staff visits Afghanistan, if change had happened as a result of negotiation things would have been more better, everyone can be blamed for the situation and we should be still thankful for the current situation," he said.

Umar said he was against inclusive government that the international community wanted, this formula had been experienced here and it did not had positive outcome. He believed that incumbent government was not inclusive as well, it was the Taliban government and it could not represent the entire Afghanistan.

Umar said: "The government needs two types of legitimacy, one is global legitimacy and the other is public legitimacy, public legitimacy is more important than global legitimacy, see! In the past 40 years, we witnessed

governments that had global legitimacy, but their popular legitimacy was weak and collapsed the governments of Dr. Najib and the Mujahideen are good examples, Ashraf Ghani's government's popular legitimacy was also completely lost. I am the supporter of form of government that has roots with the people, it is not important that the international community demand that these few faced should be included in the government." Referring to Ashraf Ghani's election to the power, he said: "In 40 million populations when some claims to have won 200,000 votes and these are bogus vote, this is not a public legitimacy." He said people has contradictory views and complains against the government in the area of jobs generation, form of government and girls' education but he was against taking power by force anymore.

When asked about the gatherings and meetings of some Afghan politicians in the foreign countries, he said: "They speak and give slogans from outside and I am here talk to elders on their face which one is more effective."

Umar said he did not see sponsored meetings good and it is possible that these types of meetings are sponsored in the foreign countries because it required huge cost to organized these types of gatherings. He said: "Bringing hundreds of people together in Tajikistan and organizing concert for them was not easy, it needed up to \$600,000, I don't know any Afghan who pay this amount from his own pocket."

Referring to the performance of



Contact Commission, he said: "This is not enough... An Afghan should also have the right to politics, the right to politics did not mean that he must be in power, not out of power, you can see in other countries there are political opponents it is not a bad term, but it was in the interest of the country, when the government or government officials are busy, they do not pay attention to their faults and mistakes and the duty of political opponents was to explore these

faults, some Afghans have to say these things from outside the country when they are in the country and have the right to political activities they would say it here."

Umar said the current government was deprived of legitimacy because the Taliban were in combat for 20 years, some countries considered them as enemies and there are anti-Taliban lobbies active outside the country.

At home, he said the government required public legitimacy

for which it should open its arms for everyone, allowed other faced in the government, let people to engage in political activities and address the women education and work issues. He said the current government was able to engage international community, adding that still it was difficult in current situation that they could get international legitimacy. He asked the international community to approve the legitimate demands of Afghan people.





KARACHI: People gathered around the site of blast in office of the Provincial Election Commission office.

## German okays bill easing citizenship rules

BERLIN: German lawmakers have passed a bill that makes the process of obtaining citizenship easier, and moved to simplify repatriations. The naturalisation reform, approved by the upper house of parliament on Friday, allows people to become German citizens while keeping their original citizenship.

People will be able to apply for citizenship after living in Germany for five years rather than eight years. Children of parents from abroad will also be granted German citizenship at birth if one parent has been legally residing in Germany for five years rather than eight. If applicants demonstrate "special integration achievements" through particularly good performance at school or work or civic engagement, they may be able to be naturalised after only three years.

One important aspect of the new law is that people who obtain their German citizenship will not have to give up the citizenship of their native country, previously only possible for res-

idents from other EU countries in Germany. This will allow tens of thousands of German-born Turks to become voters. Likewise, Germans who wish to become citizens of another country will no longer need special authorisation from German authorities.

The bill was put forward by centre-left Chancellor Olaf Scholz's socially liberal coalition. The main centre-right opposition bloc had criticised the project, and argued it would cheapen German citizenship. The bill was approved by Germany's lower house two weeks ago. At the time, Scholz hailed the legislation and said it was for those who had lived and worked in Germany for "decades". "With the new citizenship law, we are saying to all those who have often lived and worked in Germany for decades, who abide by our laws, who are at home here: You belong to Germany," Scholz said.

Filiz Polat, a Green Party migration expert, welcomed the prospect of dual citizenship and slammed parties opposing

the law as failing to understand the "modern immigration society that long existed in Germany". Al Jazeera's Dominic Kane, reporting from Berlin, said there were "speeches in favour and there were speeches against" the bill in the state's house of parliament. "But in the end, the house decided not to vote in favour, but also, not to vote against," Kane said. This means that the law goes through because of Germany's constitution.

"The elected house of parliament had already voted in favour of it," he explained. The legislation still has to be approved by Germany's upper chamber of parliament, and by the president as a formality, before it becomes law. It will come into effect by mid-May at the earliest, Kane said. Hundreds of thousands of people are already in the system, meaning there will likely be a massive backlog before new applications are processed, our correspondent added. — Aljazeera

## LHC Justice Shahid Jamil resigns

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Justice Shahid Jamil Khan of the Lahore High Court (LHC) on Friday resigned from his post. Justice Khan cited personal reasons for quitting the office. He has sent his resignation to the president of Pakistan.

According to the LHC website, Justice Khan was 11th most senior judge of the court. He was elevated to the LHC on March 22, 2014 and was due to retire on April 29, 2028 on attaining the age of superannuation. The LHC sources said Justice Khan had been on leave for more than a month.

It may be recalled that in recent days, Justice Mazahar Ali Akbar Naqvi and Justice Ijazul Ahsan of the Supreme Court have also hung up their robes. Justice Ijazul Ahsan of the Supreme Court tendered his resignation over unknown reasons on Thursday. He sent his resignation to President Arif Alvi. He was the third senior most judge of the apex court. He was set to become chief justice in October this year.

## Seven more children die of pneumonia

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Pneumonia claimed seven more lives of children during the past 24 hours in Punjab, the health department said on Friday.

According to the Punjab Health Department, a total of 764 new cases of pneumonia were reported during the last 24 hours. The health authorities said a child lost his life during the last 24 hours in Lahore, while the provincial capital logged 178 fresh cases of pneumonia. Punjab has reported 303 pneumonia-related deaths, while over 18,000 cases have been reported in the province.

Health experts attribute the rapid increase in cases and deaths in Punjab to the environmental pollution caused by smog during the winter season. Pneumonia is an infection in the lungs, often caused by viruses. It can manifest after symptoms of a cold or flu and can range from mild to severe. Typically, pneumonia is more common in children aged five or younger. The health authorities in Punjab are working to address the surge in the cases, emphasizing the need for public awareness and preventive measures to curb the spread of the infection.

## Pak decides to 'ban' import of wheat

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Caretaker Federal Government of Pakistan has decided to ban the import of wheat, sources said. According to sources, the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) took the decision to ban the state-level import of wheat as the flour prices in Pakistan are stable and the country has enough reserves.

Sources within the government revealed that Pakistan has ample amount of wheat to meet the needs of the country.

# Iran won't start a war but will respond to bullies, says president

TEHRAN (Reuters): Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi said on Friday that his country would not start a war but that it would "respond strongly" to anyone who tried to bully it. Raisi's comments came after days of speculation about how Washington might retaliate after three US soldiers were killed last Saturday in a strike on their base in Jordan by an Iranian-backed group.

CBS News, citing US officials, reported on Thursday that the United States had approved plans for multiple strikes in Iraq and Syria against multiple targets, including Iranian personnel and facilities in those countries. "We will not start any war, but if anyone wants to bully us they will receive a strong response," Raisi said in a televised speech.

"Before, when they (the Americans) wanted to talk to us, they said the military option is on the table. Now they say they have no intention of a conflict with Iran," Raisi said. "The Islamic Republic's military power in the region is not and never has been a threat to any country. Rather, it ensures security that the countries of the region can

rely on and trust," Raisi added. The United States has assessed that the drone that killed three of its soldiers and also wounded more than 40 other people, was made by Iran, four US officials have told Reuters.

Sources said Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards were pulling senior officers out of Syria. Iranian advisers assist armed groups in both Iraq, where the US has around 2,500 troops, and Syria, where it has 900. Meanwhile, Iran began construction on four more nuclear power plants in the country's south, with expected total capacity of 5,000 megawatts, the official IRNA news agency reported.

Iran seeks to produce 20,000 megawatts of nuclear energy by 2041. The country has one active nuclear power plant, a 1,000 megawatt plant that went online with help from Russia in 2011. It's also building a 300-megawatt plant in oil-rich Khuzestan province, near the western border with Iraq. The UN's nuclear watchdog said last year that Iran has increased the rate at which it is producing near-weapons grade ura-

nium. Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi said in the report that Iran "in recent weeks had increased its production of highly enriched uranium, reversing a previous output reduction from mid-2023," according to an IAEA spokesperson. Iran had previously slowed the rate at which it was enriching uranium to 60 percent purity, which is just a short technical step away from the weapons-grade level of 90 percent. The West has long suspected that Iran is acquiring nuclear weapons. Iran denies it is seeking such weapons.

IRNA quoted Mohammad Eslami, the head of Iran's atomic agency, saying it will take up to nine years to complete the new plants. The report said the four new plants are being built in the port town of Sirik on Iran's east coast, some 1,150 kilometers (715 miles) south of the capital, Tehran. Nasser Shariflou, the head of the project, told IRNA that the project will cost some \$20 billion and will create 4,000 jobs. Each plant is expected to use 35 tons of nuclear fuel per year.

## Hamas studying Gaza truce proposal, appears to rule out key provisions

BEIRUT (AP): Hamas officials said Friday that the group is studying a proposed ceasefire deal that would include prolonged pauses in fighting in Gaza and swaps of Israeli hostages for Palestinian prisoners, but at the same time appeared to rule out some of its key components.

Osama Hamdan, a senior Hamas official in Beirut, said the group remains committed to its initial demands for a permanent ceasefire. Hamdan also said the group seeks the release of thousands of Palestinian prisoners being held for acts related to the conflict with Israel, including those serving life sentences. He mentioned two by name, including Marwan Barghouti, a popular Palestinian uprising leader seen as a unifying figure.

Hamdan's comments on the prisoners were the most detailed demands yet to be raised by the group in public. The insistence on large-scale prisoner releases and on an end to the fighting in Gaza put the group at odds with the multi-stage proposal that officials from Egypt, Israel, Qatar and the United States put forth this week. The proposal does not include a permanent ceasefire.

"There is no way that this will be acceptable by the resistance," Hamdan told Lebanon's LBC TV on Friday, referring to proposed successive pauses in fighting. Israeli leaders have said they will keep fighting until Hamas is crushed, even while agreeing to long pauses that are accompanied by the release of hostages.

Hamas and other militants captured about 250 hostages during their deadly Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel that triggered the war. They continue to hold dozens of captives, after more than 100 were released during a one-week truce in November, in exchange for 240 Palestinian prisoners. Since Israel's

offensive began, more than 27,000 Palestinians have been killed and 66,000 wounded, according to the Health Ministry in the Hamas-run territory. The conflict has also left vast swaths of the tiny coastal enclave leveled, displaced 85 percent of its population and pushed a quarter of residents to starvation.

In his remarks, Hamdan also said Hamas wants to free Palestinian prisoners of all factions — not just those affiliated with the militant group. In addition to Barghouti, he named Ahmed Saadat, the head of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a small PLO faction. The prisoner release is a "national cause, not only for Hamas," he said.

Both Barghouti and Saadat were convicted of involvement in fatal attacks during the second Palestinian uprising against Israel's occupation a generation ago. Alluding to additional points of dispute, Hamdan also said that Israel is carving out a buffer zone on the Gaza side of the border. Israel has not acknowledged such plans officially, but satellite photos show new demolition along a 1-kilometer-wide (0.6-mile-wide) path along the border between Israel and the enclave. As the war nears the four-month mark, fighting continued in the southern city of Khan Younis. The Israeli military said Friday that its efforts focused on fighters, weapons and infrastructure in the city, a key target of Israel's ground offensive in recent weeks.

Tens of thousands of residents of Khan Younis and surrounding areas have fled south to the town of Rafah, on the border with Egypt, which the United Nations said on Friday is becoming a "pressure cooker of despair." "We fear for what comes next," said Jens Laerke, spokesman for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian

Affairs. "It's like every week we think, you know, it can't get any worse. Well, go figure. It gets worse."

Hamdan's remarks reaffirmed statements from other Hamas officials, including the group's top political leader Ismail Haniyeh, who said Tuesday that the group was studying the terms but remained committed to seeking the "full withdrawal" of Israeli forces from Gaza and steps toward a long-term ceasefire. Another Hamas official said Friday that the group would answer "very soon" and ask for several unspecified changes. He refused to give any details on what they're seeking or how many hostages would be released in return for how many prisoners.

The multi-stage proposal on the table was drafted by officials from the United States, Israel, Qatar and Egypt. Qatar and Egypt have been serving as mediators between Israel and Hamas. A senior Egyptian official familiar with the discussions on Friday described the proposal, which he said Hamas had sent positive signals about. The Egyptian official and the Hamas official spoke on condition of anonymity because the indirect talks are still ongoing.

The proposal, according to the Egyptian official, includes an initial ceasefire of six to eight weeks during which Hamas would release elderly hostages, women and children in return for hundreds of Palestinians jailed by Israel. Throughout that phase, negotiations would continue on prolonging the ceasefire and releasing more prisoners and hostages. Israel would allow the number of aid trucks to entering Gaza would increase to up to 300 daily — from a few dozen currently — and let displaced Gaza residents gradually return to their homes in the north, according to the proposal.

## Rafah overwhelmed with fleeing Gazans

GAZA (AFP): Tens of thousands of people crammed into a street in Rafah, the southern Gaza city where vast numbers have sought refuge from advancing Israeli ground troops. "These are the worst months of our lives," said Noha Al-Madhun, who fled from the Beit Lahia area of northern Gaza and was taken in by relatives along with some of her children.

"My husband and eldest sons sleep in a tent. There's no space for everyone. We sleep on the floor and we feel the cold" without enough blankets to go round, she said. "There aren't enough apartments or even places to set up extra tents," added Madhun. More than half of Gaza's population of 2.4 million is in Rafah, on the border with Egypt, according to the United Nations.

Those without relatives to host them or the means to rent apartments have found themselves in tents wherever there is space: along streets, in public squares, sports stadiums or parks. Abdulkarim Misbah, 32, said he left his home in the northern Jabalia refugee camp and reached Khan Yunis, only to be uprooted once more. "We escaped last week from death in Khan Yunis, without bringing anything with us. We didn't find a place to stay. We slept on the streets the first two nights.

The women and children slept in a mosque," he said. Then they received a donated tent, setting it up right beside the Egyptian border. "My

four children are shivering from the cold. They feel sick and unwell all the time," said Misbah.

Most people are concentrated in the city center or west, trying to avoid the eastern edges toward the Israeli border or the north which is dangerously close to fighting in nearby Khan Yunis. After the war erupted on October 7 with Hamas militants' unprecedented attack on Israel, the country's military ordered Gazans to leave their homes in the north. Those instructions have since expanded, forcing many Palestinians to flee time and again.

Gaza City resident Amjad Abdel Aal, who fled to a school shelter in Rafah, said it took her two hours to be driven a distance which before the war would take just 15 minutes.

"The congestion was awful," she said, waiting in a wheelchair in a long line for donations of blankets and mattresses. "There aren't a lot of cars because of the fuel shortage. Everyone walks, rides a truck or donkey cart," added the barefoot 28-year-old.

The United Nations estimates 1.7 million have been forced from their homes by the war since October 7. The Hamas attack on Israel resulted in the deaths of around 1,160 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on official figures. Israel's withering offensive has killed at least 27,131 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to the

health ministry in the Hamas-run territory.

With Egypt's border firmly shut to most Gazans throughout the war, the streets of Rafah have become packed with displaced people. Mehran Dabbabish, 41, a taxi driver from Khan Yunis, said the situation was "getting worse by the day." "The road between Khan Yunis and Rafah used to take 20 to 30 minutes at worst. Today, the shortest trip within Rafah takes an hour and a half to two hours," he told AFP.

The overcrowding is putting a massive strain on everyone and means moving anywhere, by any means, is incredibly difficult. Another Gazan, Naima Al-Bayumi, lamented how tired she was just halfway through a four-hour journey by foot to visit her relative in hospital. "I rode a donkey cart a few times and fell off because of the intense scramble," she told AFP.

Bayumi started crying as she recounted the bombardment which hit her home, killing her baby twins.

"I gave birth to them in the first week of the war, after 13 years of marriage," said the 38-year-old, who lives in a tent with her husband. "I don't want to live anymore," she said. Elsewhere on the road, people helped another woman clamber aboard a truck filled with dozens of passengers. She clung to the side of the truck with her baby, to stop them falling out, and screamed: "Death is more merciful than this life!"

## ICJ rules that it will hear part of Kyiv-Moscow genocide case

THE HAGUE: The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has ruled that parts of Ukraine's case against Russia arguing that Moscow baselessly accused Kyiv of genocide to justify the 2022 invasion can move forward. However, the ICJ ruled on Friday that it will not address whether Russia violated the 1948 Genocide Convention by using what Ukraine says were trumped-up genocide charges as a pretext for the war, even if the invasion may have violated international law broadly.

Instead, the case will proceed to assess whether Ukraine committed genocide in the eastern parts of the country, as Russia claims — a matter where judges ruled that they have jurisdiction. When Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered the invasion on February 24, 2022, part of his argument was that pro-Russian people in eastern Ukraine had been "subjected to bullying and genocide by the Kyiv regime".

Ukraine filed a suit at the ICJ, "emphatically denying" this and arguing that Russia's use of "genocide" as a pretext for invasion went against the Genocide Convention. "In the present case, even if the Russian Federation had, in bad faith, alleged that Ukraine committed genocide and taken certain measures against it under such a pretext, which the respondent [Ukraine] contends, this would not in itself constitute a violation of obligations" under the genocide convention, the ICJ said in the ruling read out by its president, Joan Donoghue on Friday. — Aljazeera