

2 children die of pneumonia
F.P. Report

LAHORE: Pneumonia claimed two more lives of children during the past 24 hours in Punjab. According to the Punjab Health Department, a total of 605 new cases of pneumonia were reported during the last 24 hours. Punjab has reported 318 pneumonia-related deaths, while over 20,872 cases have been reported in the province whereas Lahore only reported 58 deaths and 4,050 cases.

2 injured in grenade attack
F.P. Report

WANA: At least two bystanders sustained injuries after a grenade attack near a police official's car in Lower Wana town of South Waziristan district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Monday, police said. According to police, SHO Wana police station Raza Ullah was travelling on Bypass Road in his vehicle when the explosion occurred.



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D I KHAN: KP Caretaker Chief Minister Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah and others offering the funeral prayer of ten Shaheed police officials.

India a terrorist state, says PM

F.P. Report

MUZAFFARABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Monday said that India was a terrorist state, which had been committing the worst atrocities and brutalities against the innocent people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir for decades.

The world was, however, silently watching the Indian state terrorism against the Kashmiris, he regretted while addressing the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly on the occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day. The prime minister said for last many years, India was presenting a false narrative and trying to weaken the indigenous movement of the Kashmiris for freedom by wrongly labeling them as terrorists.

There was a clear difference between terrorism and the people's struggle for independence, he added. PM Kakar said that the Indian leadership was also claiming that Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu & Kashmir were part of their country. "On this day, I make it clear that that India should not have any such illusions. We believe in peace and are showing maximum patience and tolerance, but any misadventure in this regard will be forcefully responded."

He reaffirmed that Pakistan did not want any conflict in the region, however, it was fully capable of strongly retaliating any attack on its soil. India, he said, had for many times tested Pakistan's capacity, and if still had any desire in that regard then "we are fully ready to show our might".

He said if India was a true democracy then it should give the people of Kashmir their just right to self-determination, besides restoring all the basic human rights in the IIOJK. PM Kakar said India must also stop the gross violations of human rights in the region along with releasing all the political prisoners. It should also abrogate all the strict emergency laws, besides removing its heavy military presence from the villages and towns of Kashmir. It should allow the Kashmiris to hold peaceful gatherings, he added.

The prime minister said that India must allow unrestricted access to the observers of UN and Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), international media and human rights organizations to IIOJK to get first-hand information about the situation there; and investigate and report

human rights violations. He said that India's illegal and unilateral actions of August 5, 2019 usurping the special status of the IIOJK were a blatant violation of international laws, including the UN Charter, 4th Geneva Convention and the relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

India had since been engaged in taking further measures to alter the demographic structure and political landscape of the held Valley, he added. PM Kakar said that the 'Kashmir Solidarity Day' was annually observed on the 5th February across Pakistan to express its unwavering support for the Kashmiris' just struggle for realization of their right to self-determination.

It was also an occasion to pay rich tribute to the sacrifices rendered by the Kashmiri brothers and sisters during the last 76 years, he added. The prime minister said that Pakistan had consistently maintained that a lasting solution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute was possible only in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and as per the wishes of Kashmiri people.

Pakistan would continue its moral, diplomatic and political support for the just cause, he vowed. PM Kakar said that the relevant UN Security Council resolutions provided that the final disposition of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute would be made in accordance with the will of its people through the democratic method of a free and impartial plebiscite conducted under the auspices of the United Nations.

However, he added, India over the last 76 years had carried out a relentless campaign to intimidate and suppress the IIOJK people as evident from extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detentions and custodial torture. Earlier on his arrival at arrival at the AJK Legislative Assembly, the prime minister was presented a guard of honour.

Participation of youth vital to strengthen democracy, political system: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar said youth should be engaged in the political system and their energies should be utilized for strengthening democracy in the country.

Speaking during a podcast, he said political parties should be democratic minded to fortify democracy in the country. Political parties in government should improve their performance to gain political space in the country, he added. The prime minister said leadership of the political parties should be elected in a demo-

Last day for candidates to campaign today

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Today, February 6, marks the final curtain call for candidates across Pakistan as the 2024 election campaign officially concludes at midnight. With the clock ticking down, candidates are making last-ditch efforts to sway voters across the country in their favour.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has declared the period following February 6 and 7 as a pre-poll silence period, strictly prohibiting campaigning activities like rallies, public meetings, and media appearances. This silent period is intended to provide voters with a space for reflection before they cast their ballots on February 8. Despite the approaching deadline, the political temperature remains high across the country. Candidates are expected to utilize the remaining hours to hold final rallies, address public gatherings, and engage in door-to-door campaigning. Social media is also buzzing with intense online campaigns as parties and candidates make their final appeals.

However, after the clock strikes midnight tonight, the hustings will fall silent. Any candidate found flouting the ECP's guidelines and engaging in campaigning activities during the pre-poll silence period will face strict action, including potential disqualification.

With the campaign period drawing to a close, attention now shifts to the crucial polling day. Over 128 million registered voters across Pakistan will have the opportunity to exercise their franchise and select their representatives for the 16th National Assembly and various provincial assemblies. The pre-poll silence period serves as a reminder of the importance of a calm and reflective atmosphere before the elections. With campaigning concluding, both voters and candidates alike will have a chance to pause and contemplate their choices before the critical decision of February 8.

Pakistan Army to complete election deployment today

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Punjab Home Department said on Monday that contingents of the Pakistan Army had already arrived in Lahore, Sheikhupura and Kasur districts to provide security during the general elections while they would reach the remaining districts of the province by this evening.

In a statement, the department said that work on the installation of cameras at sensitive polling stations of the province was underway at a brisk pace, and would be completed by this evening. It informed that deputy commissioners of all districts had been directed to remain in touch with the army officials.

Over 53,000 retired personnel of Pakistan Army as well as former employees of different departments, including police, Rescue 1122, Civil Defence, Forest, Irrigation, will also provide security during the elections.

10 policemen martyred in D I Khan attack

F.P. Report

D I KHAN: At least 10 policemen embraced martyrdom and nine others sustained injuries when terrorists attacked a police station in Dera Isamil Khan in the wee hours of Monday.

Police said terrorists attacked a police station in tehsil Darabn of D I Khan late on Sunday night killing 10 police personnel and injuring nine others. Police said terrorists from all sides attacked on police station, hurled hand grenades and resorted to intense firing.

The security officials retaliated but the terrorists taking cover of the dark managed to escape. All the injured were shifted to DHQ Hospital for treatment. Police and security forces cordoned off the area and started a search operation.

It may be recalled that on December 12, 2023 the terrorists had attacked Daraban police station left three cops embraced martyrdom. The terrorists had hit their explosive-laden vehicle with the main gate of the police station. At least 16 security personnel had also sustained wounds in the attack.

Meanwhile, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Chief Minister on Monday visited Dera Isamil Khan to review security situation ahead of general elections scheduled to be held on Thursday (February 08).

During the visit, the chief minister was accompanied by other high officials including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Secretary Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry and Inspector General of Police (IGP) Akhtar Hayat Khan. The visiting officers along with Regional Police Officer (RPO) Dera Nasir Mehmood Satti, Commissioner Dera Zafarul Islam, Deputy Commissioner Mansoor Arshad, District Police Officer (DPO) Abdul Rauf Babar Qaisrani also attended the funeral prayers of the policemen here at Ejaz Shaheed Police Lines who embraced martyrdom in a terrorist attack on Chaudhwan police station in the wee hours.

Later, the chief minister visited polling station and modern Command and Control room set up at Ejaz Shaheed Police Lines and reviewed the arrangements. Chief Minister Arshad Hussain Shah also chaired a high level meeting held here at Deputy Commissioner House in connection with security and peaceful conduct of upcoming elections. The meeting was attended by Frontier Constabulary (FC) South Inspector General Maj. General Haroon Hameed, KP Chief Secretary Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry, KP IGP Akhtar Hayat

Khan, Commissioner Dera Zafarul Islam, RPO Dera Nasir Mehmood Satti, DC Mansoor Arshad and DPO Abdul Rauf Babar Qaisrani.

The RPO briefed the meeting about the today's terrorist attack on Chaudhwan police station and the security arrangements made for peaceful conduct of upcoming general elections. The security arrangements and security plan for the elections were discussed in detail. Speaking on this occasion, the caretaker chief minister said the peaceful conduct of the general elections was a top priority of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Civil administration and police. All the available resources would be utilized for the purpose, he added.

KP Caretaker Minister of Information and Public Relations for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah Kakakhel, voiced profound sorrow over the tragic loss of policemen in a terrorist assault on the police station in Tehsil Daraban of Dera Ismail Khan and Karak.

He condemned the incident, expressing heartfelt condolences to the grieving families and prayers for elevation of the martyrs' status in Jannat. Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah Kakakhel extended his prayers for the swift recovery of the injured police personnels, emphasizing the unwavering commitment of valiant policemen who make timeless sacrifices for the peace of the province.

Acknowledging the courageous efforts that have significantly curbed terrorism, he asserted that the provincial government and the entire nation stand steadfastly by the police force in their mission to eradicate this menace. Highlighting the resilience of the nation in the face of events like those in Dera Ismail Khan and Karak, the Caretaker Minister declared that any attempt to disrupt the peaceful environment during this critical phase, especially in the context of the upcoming general election, will be thwarted.

He deplored the attack on police vehicles in Karak district, attributing it to a specific political group attempting to sow chaos. Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah Kakakhel declared such actions as acts of terrorism, promising severe consequences for those responsible. Emphasizing the government's commitment to maintaining law and order, the Caretaker Minister warned of strict measures against any individual or group obstructing the administration, police, and election staff. He assured that justice would prevail, vowing not to allow a repeat of incidents akin to May 9.



MUZAFFARABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar laid a floral wreath at the Martyres Monument on Kashmir Solidarity Day.

Kashmir Solidarity Day observed in Pakistan, AJK

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Kashmir Solidarity Day was observed in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistan today, with a renewed commitment to support the just struggle of Kashmiris for their inalienable right to self-determination, as enshrined in the relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

In Islamabad, a rally was taken out from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The streets resonated with patriotic tunes, melodies, and impassioned chants, as participants voiced their support for the freedom of Kashmir and unity among its people. The rally was led by the Foreign Secretary, Sairs Sajjad Qazi and spokesperson Muzammil Zahra Baloch. Federal Ministers Murtaza Solangi, Jamal Shah, Aniq Ahmed and Fawad Hassan Fawad also joined the rally. The Foreign Office employees participated in large numbers, proudly waving the flags of both

Pakistan and Azad Kashmir.

Even the young participants from Pakistan Sweet Homes contributed their enthusiasm to the event. A minute of silence was observed outside the Parliament House, followed by the blaring of sirens in support of Kashmiris. In Karachi, Karachi Mayor Barrister Murtaza Wahab led a rally in connection with Kashmir Solidarity Day. Municipal Commissioner SM Afzal Zaidi, heads of various departments and other officers were also present on this occasion. Addressing the rally, the mayor said: "United Nations should play its role to bring an end to the aggression against the Muslim world, including Kashmiris. After the recent heavy rain in Karachi, our team carried on drainage work on the roads till morning."

Rallies were also taken out in Lahore, Peshawar and many other cities of Pakistan to support Kashmiris. The leaders of the rallies urged the UN to take steps to end

atrocities on Kashmiris by Indian forces. They also called for provision of right to self-determination to the people of Kashmir. People from different walks of life, including doctors, lawyers, social activists, students, and others, held rallies and demonstrations, forming human chains across the country to infuse new spirits in the Kashmiris, who have been fighting for their freedom.

All Pakistani missions abroad also organized seminars and photo exhibitions to draw the world's attention towards the worst form of subjugation and human rights violations committed by India in the Indian Illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). The Pakistani media, both electronic and print, aired special programs and printed special supplements to highlight the significance of Kashmir Solidarity Day and the decades-long struggle of Kashmiri people against the illegal Indian occupation.

KP CM reviews election preparedness

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Justice Retired Syed Arshad Hussain Shah, chaired a significant meeting in Abbottabad to assess the preparations for the upcoming general elections. The meeting, attended by top officials including Chief Secretary Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry and Inspector General of Police Akhtar Hayat Khan Gandapur, focused on reviewing security arrangements and overall readiness for the elections in Hazara Division.

During the briefing, it was highlighted that all necessary arrangements for the general elections have been completed across the districts of Hazara Division. A total of 2862 polling stations have been established, with 392 identified as highly sensitive, 982 as sensitive, and 1488 as normal. To ensure security, 14322 security personnel are required, and various departments have been engaged to address any shortage. Special preparations have been made for conducting elections in snow bound areas.

Expressing satisfaction with the preparations, CM Arshad Hussain Shah urged the administration to remain vigilant until the conclusion of the elections. Emphasizing the importance of diligence, he directed Deputy Commissioners and District Police Officers to personally monitor all matters, ensuring timely transportation of election staff and equipment, accommodation and security for women staff, and adherence to Election Commission's orders.

The CM assured full support from the provincial government, urging authorities to pay special attention to the security of foreigners involved in national projects in Hazara Division. He also raised the issue of zero load shedding during election days, securing assurance from the Federal Secretary Energy that there would be no electricity load shedding from February 7 to February 9, considering the harsh weather conditions in the province. The CM directed the provincial authorities to officially communicate this directive.

PPP slams threats hurled by Tarar

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Slamming PML-N candidate from a Lahore constituency Ataullah Tarar for hurling threats at her party's voters, PPP Senator Palwasha Khan on Monday asked the PML-N to make its stance clear on its leader's aggressive language.

Addressing a press conference in Islamabad, she appealed to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to take notice of the PML-N leader's language. She said the reason why Tarar had resorted to such tactics was because he knew fully well that he would taste defeat in the elections. She claimed that the PML-N had the habit of purchasing votes.

"Do you think that you can browbeat the PPP by hurling threats?" Palwasha asked the PML-N candidate. It appeared, she went on to say, as if Tarar had watched an Indian movie. "The language he is using is not expected from a civilized man," she added. The PPP senator said that Tarar should be mindful of the fact that the people hold the PML-N accountable in the elections. She asked Tarar how on earth he asked PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari to leave Lahore. "Let me remind you that even in the past, the PPP faced political heavyweights in Lahore."

Palwasha claimed that even the PML-N voters were not happy with the party's decision to award ticket to Tarar for the elections. "The bloodbath committed by the PML-N government in Model Town in 2014 is not hidden from anyone," the PPP senator said.

(Continued on Back Page)

COAS visits LoC, meets soldiers

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Prime Minister of Pakistan, Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS) visited Muzaffarabad. COAS later visited troops deployed on the front lines along Line of Control (LoC) in Sarian Sector. Upon arrival at Jammu and Kashmir Monument Muzaffarabad, PM of Pakistan, PM of AJ&K and COAS laid floral wreath at Martyrs' Monument and paid rich tribute to the supreme sacrifices of Shuhada.

The leadership acknowledged that the fortitude, resilience and unwavering faith of Kashmiris in the face of unabated brutality of Indian occupation forces in IIOJK had been exemplary. The brewing humanitarian and security crises in the IIOJK seriously threatens regional peace and stability. Pakistan would always stand with Kashmiris in their just struggle for the inalienable right to self determination in light of UNSC resolutions.

"India is attempting to change the demography of IIOJK through illegal administrative and unilaterally imposed draconian



laws and security clampdowns. Such machinations cannot suppress the will and the yearning of the Kashmiri people to attain their legitimate objectives." COAS was briefed about the latest situation along the LoC and appreciated the operational readiness, high morale and effective response of troops to Indian CFVs.

Addressing the troops, COAS reiterated that any aggression or violation of territorial sovereignty of Pakistan will be responded with full national resolve and military might. "Pakistan Army is well versed with the full threat spectrum and is perpetually ready to respond effective-

ly". COAS also mentioned the Indian state sponsored terrorism in Pakistan which now extended to heinous targeting of individual Pakistani citizens on our soil.

Such callous disregard for international law and norms of international system was becoming a routine occurrence and India was now being called out openly by many countries in the world, exposing her sham credentials, COAS concluded. Pakistan would continue to expose all such attempts and ensure the security of its citizens. Earlier on arrival, COAS was received by Commander Rawalpindi Corps.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Provincial Ministers Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah Kakakhel, Dr. Qasim Jan and Ahmad Rasool Bangash calls on Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali at Governor House.

LPC vows to voice for IIOJK people at every forum

LAHORE (APP): On the occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day, the Lahore Press Club (LPC) office-bearers and governing body member here Monday expressed their commitment to stand firm with Kashmiri brothers and sisters on their principled stand of right to self-determination as envisioned in the UNO (United Nations Organization) resolutions. They demand of India, the claimant of the so-called biggest democracy, to implement the UN resolutions and let the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) to decide about their future. India atrocities in the IIOJK must be ended, they said and vowed that for this, the Lahore Press Club stands by the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir and will continue to play its role in conveying their voice at every forum.

The hoisting of the flag of Pakistan and Kashmir at the Lahore Press Club building on February 5 reflects the sentiments of the club members that the hearts of Pakistanis beat with those of Kashmiris brethren.

Kashmir Solidarity Day observed at KU

KARACHI (APP): The Kashmir Solidarity Day was observed to express whole-hearted support with a renewed commitment of the Pakistani nation to the just struggle of the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu, and Kashmir (IIOJK), by Karachi University's Office of the Students' Advisor at the Business School Auditorium here on Monday. The KU Inclusive Students Society presented the national anthem at the beginning of the program.

Later the KU Civic and Social Responsibility Society showcased a special documentary about Kashmir, its beauty, historic values, and struggle for self-determination. On this occasion, the KU Arts and Culture Society held a quiz related to the Kashmiri people and its historic break ground, and struggle against the oppression in the Indian Illegally Occupied Kashmir.

Gujranwala connects with Sialkot Motorway

LAHORE (APP): In a remarkable achievement, Gujranwala has been seamlessly connected to the Sialkot-Lahore Motorway within an unprecedented span of five months. The newly inaugurated Gujranwala Expressway, a mega project, was formally opened for traffic by Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi.

Covering a distance of 15.2 km with two lanes, the expressway reduces travel time between Gujranwala and Lahore to an impressive 45 minutes. Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi, during his inspection of the expressway, commended the high-quality construction work and lauded the performance of FWO (Frontier Works Organization). The citizens of Gujranwala can now reach Lahore in the time it takes to travel from Lahore city to the defense area, according to a handout issued here Monday.

Approximately 8,500 vehicles are expected to traverse the Gujranwala Expressway daily, ensuring convenient and efficient travel for thousands of passengers. Furthermore,

Chief Minister Naqvi inaugurated the 74 km long stretch from Gujranwala to Kot Sarwar Interchange, Hafizabad Road.

Addressing the media after the expressway's opening, Chief Minister Punjab acknowledged the relentless efforts of various stakeholders. Secretary Communication and Works, through multiple visits, played a pivotal role, and the local administration demonstrated unwavering dedication. Chief Secretary Zahid Akhtar Zaman swiftly resolved issues related to the expressway, while Commissioner Gujranwala and his team worked diligently to acquire land.

Chief Minister Naqvi expressed gratitude for the dedication of individuals like Colonel Imran, who worked tirelessly, even at late hours, to ensure the project's timely completion. The entire team, including the Planning and Development Department, contributed day and night to the expressway's construction.

Looking ahead, Mohsin Naqvi announced plans for a commercial area around the Gujranwala Expressway and the con-

struction of an overhead bridge connecting it to Chan da Qilla. He shared the exciting news of initiating the Safe City Project in Gujranwala, emphasizing its utility for citizens and potential benefits for election monitoring.

With the inauguration of the Gujranwala Expressway, the distance between Lahore and Gujranwala has been significantly reduced to 45 minutes, marking a crucial development for the city. Notably, ongoing projects like Band road, SL3, and several others are nearing completion, showcasing the commitment to finishing initiated endeavors.

Present at the inauguration ceremony were Provincial Ministers Dr. Javed Akram, Amir Mir, Afzal Ali Nasir, Bilal Afzal, Chief Secretary, Inspector General Police, Chairman Planning and Development Board, Secretary Health, Secretary Housing, Secretary Communication and Works, Commissioner Gujranwala, RPO Gujranwala, Deputy Commissioner, and other relevant authorities.

Pakistan incomplete without Kashmir: Speakers

LAHORE (APP): Kashmir is the jugular vein of Pakistan and Kashmir issue is an incomplete agenda of partition of the sub-continent, and Pakistan is incomplete without having accession of Kashmir.

This was stated by the speakers at a special event held on Kashmir Solidarity Day at Aiwan-i-Karkunan Tehreek-i-Pakistan on Monday. The event started with the recitation of verses from Holy Quran followed by the Naat-e-Rasool-e-Maqbool (PBUH).

Nazria Pakistan Azad Kashmir Forum president Maulana Muhammad Shafi Josh said that sheer violations of human rights by brutal forces of India could never suppress the firm resolve of the people of Indian Illegally

Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) for continuing struggle till achieving liberation from the Indian clutches.

Senator Waleed Iqbal said, "Kashmir issue is one of the oldest, unresolved items on the agenda of the United Nations." He said no amount of state terrorism, unleashed by Indian Occupation forces, could break the will of the Kashmiris or undermine their legitimate struggle. He said that Allama Muhammad Iqbal always talked about freedom of Kashmir in his 'Kalam' and he wanted freedom of Kashmir.

The event was attended and addressed by renowned journalists, columnists, social figures, intellectuals, poets and philosophers.

It is pertinent to mention here that Nazria Pakistan held a demonstration here at Kashmir Chowk, Aiwan-i-Qauid-i-Azam to express solidarity with Kashmiri brethren and sisters. Nazria-i-Pakistan Trust Secretary Naheed Imran led the demonstration.

A large number of protesters from different walks of life participated in the demonstration and raised slogans like 'Kashmir Banay ga Pakistan' etc. Protestors said that Pakistan will continue to lend moral, diplomatic and political support to the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir until they attain freedom from Indian oppression in accordance with the UN Security Council resolutions.

Pakistan always keeps Kashmir issue alive at global forums: Governor

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur Rehman said on Monday that Pakistan has always played its role in keeping the issue of Kashmir alive at all forums of the world including the United Nations Organization (UNO) and Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

He was addressing the ceremony in connection with Kashmir Solidarity Day organized by Punjab Department of Information and Culture here at Al-Hamra Arts Council where Secretary Information Daniyal Saleem Gilani, Director General Public Relations Punjab, Rubina Afzal, Kashmiri Hurriyat leader Mushtaq Mehmood and a large number of people from different walks of life were present.

The Governor said that today Pakistanis and millions of Kashmiris

living around the world, are observing Kashmir Solidarity Day against India's invasion and illegal occupation of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. He added that the purpose of observing this day is to draw the attention of the international community towards the Indian usurpation and oppression of the occupied state of Jammu and Kashmir so that the oppressed Kashmiris get their right to self-determination. He said that the attack on the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir on 27 October 1947 was an armed aggression that had shattered the peace of the region. Now most of the countries of the world have become aware of India's nefarious designs. He said that a peaceful solution to the Kashmir issue according to the UN resolutions is also better for India. He added that justice

and goodness always prevail, while oppression and tyranny are doomed to be defeated ultimately.

The Governor said that today, people of Pakistan and Kashmiris from all over the world are giving a clear message to the world that lasting peace cannot be established in the region without resolving the Kashmir issue. The heinous violations of human rights in occupied Jammu and Kashmir have turned occupied Jammu and Kashmir into an open-air prison. He emphasized that the international community must focus on the just solution of the Kashmir and the Palestine issue so that the future of the world can be secured. He said that the helpless people of Kashmir and Palestine are waiting for immediate help and assistance from the world.

Joint Flat march by Rangers, police for security of election-2024

KARACHI (APP): The Pakistan Rangers Sindh and District Kemari Police on Monday held a Joint flag march in connection with the security of the general election 2024, here.

The flag march was organized in different areas of Site, Baldia, and Kemari Division. SDPOs and SHOs of Kemari district along with a heavy contingent of police and rangers participated in the flag march. The purpose of the flag march is to develop the sense of security among the citizens, said SSP Kemari Arif Aslam Rao.

He said that the police will ensure foolproof security arrangements on the occasion of General Election 2024. He said that Kemari Police is fully prepared to provide security for the peaceful conduct of general elections.

Police arrest 2 suspected Lyari Gang members

KARACHI (APP): In a recent operation, District City Police apprehended two individuals suspected to be affiliated with Lyari gangs following an exchange of gunfire. According to a spokesperson for the District City Police, the suspects, identified as Khurram Shahzad and Waqas, were found in possession of two pistols along with ammunition, as well as a motorcycle. The confrontation occurred in the vicinity of the Garden police station.

Initial reports suggest that the accused are associated with the Shakeel Badshah and Faisal Pathan factions of the Lyari gang, known for their involvement in various criminal activities. Notably, Khurram Shahzad has a history of multiple arrests and previous incarcerations.

PTC expresses solidarity with Kashmiris

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Transport Company has displayed panaflexes at various bus stops in the provincial capital to express solidarity with the Kashmiri people and to highlight ongoing human rights violations in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

According to official sources here on Monday, the flexes were installed at the bus stops of all the main highways of Lahore.

PMML holds Kashmir solidarity meeting, rallies

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Markazi Muslim League Lahore (PMML), has organized a public meeting in connection with Kashmir Solidarity Day here at GPO Chowk, Mall Road on Monday.

Thousands of people in rallies from across the city participated in the meeting to show solidarity with their Kashmiri brethren, and they were holding banners and placards inscribed with slogans appreciating the bravery and patience of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) people against Indian atrocities, and condemning the Indian inhuman acts and barbarism in the IIOJK. The partici-

pants chanted slogan of 'Free IIOJK', Kashmir issue be resolved as per UNO resolution; and world must stop India aggression in the IIOJK. The PMML President Khalid Masood Sindhu and other leaders including Chaudhry Muhammad Sarwar, Engineer Adil Khaliq, Malik Ejaz, Engineer Haris Dar and Omar Abdullah addressed the Kashmir Solidarity meeting.

Khalid Masood Sindhu said that under no circumstances, the issue of Kashmir will be put under the carpet and the PMML will emerge as the strongest voice of the IIOJK people braving the Indian atrocities."Kashmir is the jugular

vein of Pakistan and will be liberated according to the vision of Qauid-i-Azam. Kashmiris' freedom movement is a legitimate struggle in the light of all international laws, and India has always tried to link it to terrorism but failed bitterly," he said and vowed that his party will leave no stone unturned to highlight this burning issue at all forums.

PMML Lahore Division's President Chaudhry Muhammad Sarwar addressed the people of occupied Kashmir that their Pakistani brothers are alive and they will not be at peace until the independence of IIOJK from Indian yoke.

SNGPL continued raids in Punjab, Islamabad

F.P. Report

LAHORE: During the ongoing crackdown against gas pilferers, SNGPL continued raids in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad, disconnecting another 461 connections; Rs 6.63 million fine imposed in Lahore, the regional team disconnected 20 connections on illegal use of gas while another 9 on use of compressor.

In Rawalpindi the team disconnected 97 connections on illegal use of gas while another 5 on use of compressor and amount of Rs 0.42 million against gas theft cases.

The team also lodged one FIR against gas theft case. In Multan one connection was disconnected on illegal use of gas while another 26 on use of compressor and team also imposed fine of Rs 0.04 million against gas theft cases.

In Peshawar and Karak, the company disconnected 130 connections on account of direct use of gas and illegal use of gas and amount of Rs 4.14 million against gas theft cases. The team also lodged 10 FIRs against gas pilfers. The team of Mardan disconnected 08 connections on illegal use of gas and also lodged one FIR. In Sahiwal, six con-

nections were disconnected on use of compressor. In Sheikhupura 88 connections were disconnected on illegal use of gas while another 1 on use of compressor and amount of Rs 1.8 million booked against gas theft cases.

The regional team of Bahawalpur disconnected 44 connections on illegal use of gas and another 15 on use of compressor and also imposed fine of Rs 0.14 million against gas pilfers. In Faisalabad the team disconnected 6 connections on illegal use of gas while another 5 on use of compressor and also imposed fine of Rs0.09 million against gas theft cases.

Kashmir Solidarity Day Leaders Rally for Rights and Education

KARACHI (APP): Muhammad Younus Dhaga, the Caretaker Sindh Minister for Revenue, emphasized the significance of Kashmir Solidarity Day, portraying it as an ongoing mission stemming from the partition of the sub-continent.

Despite being a struggle spanning 76 years, he underscored that no level of brutality or disregard for justice could diminish the Kashmiris' right to self-determination.

These sentiments were conveyed during his address at the "5th February Solidarity Day Kashmir Walk" event, organized by

Commissioner Karachi Division, Muhammad Saleem Rajput. Dhaga rejected any notion that the Indian government's revocation of Kashmir's special status would weaken the Kashmiris' resolve or dampen Pakistan's support for their cause.

He reiterated Pakistan's commitment to a peaceful struggle and affirmed its unwavering support for Kashmiri freedom.

Rana Hussain, the Caretaker Sindh Education Minister, echoed Dhaga's sentiments, urging Pakistani children, youth, politicians, and military to unite in securing Kashmir's rights. He emphasized the inclu-

sion of Kashmir in the national curriculum to educate future generations about the injustices and atrocities endured by Kashmiris, expressing hope for a future free from such cruelty.

The event also featured addresses by the Chairperson of Occupied Kashmir Self-Determination International Movement UK and students from various schools.

Notable attendees included Commissioner Karachi Muhammad Saleem Rajput, Deputy Commissioners, education officials, school principals, and a diverse array of participants from the public.

26.9 million voters to elect 191 legislators from Sindh: PEC

KARACHI (APP): The Provincial Election Commission has completed all arrangements to hold fair, free and transparent elections on 61 National as well as 130 Provincial Assemblies general seats in Sindh.

This was stated by Provincial Election Commissioner Sindh Sharifullah and Joint Election Commissioner Nazar Abbas while addressing a joint press conference here at the PEC office on Monday.

Sharifullah said a apart from 61 general seats of the National Assembly and 130 of the Provincial Assembly, polls will be held on 14 reserved seats of women in the National Assembly 29 reserved seats of women and 9 seats of minorities in the Sindh Assembly.

As many as 26,994,769 registered voters will exercise their right of franchise

for which 19,008 polling stations have been set up by the Election Commission of Pakistan, PEC said and added that all arrangements were in the final stage and now we are preparing for the polling day.

He said polling material had been dispatched to the districts and the polling scheme was finalized on January 24 after receiving data from the polling staff, they were provided required training. He informed that the printing process of the ballot papers had already been completed and the same have been delivered to all districts while bags are ready which will be delivered to the polling staff on February 07.

All District Returning officers have devised a transportation plan from where ballot papers will be dispatched and after completion of the polling and

counting process, the ballot papers will be taken back to the points already notified by the DROs, Sharifullah said.

He said that all facilities for the Returning Officers were provided at the designated points where results will be announced. He said with the support of the provincial caretaker government, a security plan was devised and the CCTV cameras would be installed at all highly sensitive polling stations. He said the bags containing polling material would be handed over to the presiding officers on February 07 and they will be taken to the polling stations.

Sharifullah said on February 08, polling would start at about 8 am and then presiding officers would return to the same point from where they departed to the polling station and hand over the bags and

results to the returning officers concerned.

He said the facilities have been arranged for media persons covering polling activities at the provincial Election Commission office, RO offices and other points where results would be prepared so that they could ensure media coverage efficiently.

Joint Election Commissioner Nazar Abbas informed that in Sindh 6,524 polling stations were declared as highly sensitive and the District Returning Officers will be responsible for all security issues in consultation with the security forces.

He said Police and Rangers personnel would be deployed at all highly sensitive polling stations while Army soldiers would be deployed where the District Administration deemed it necessary.



LAHORE: Women participating in rally on the occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day at Mall Road. —APP Photo



PESHAWAR: President of PTI-P Ulema-O-Mashaikh wing Maulana Shoaib addressing a press conference.

India breaks all records of atrocities in IIOJK

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali here Monday said that India has broken all records of oppression and brutalities after illegally invaded the Occupied Kashmir 77 years ago and demanded international community to take notice of it.

He also demanded dignity and respect to the people of the held valley. Addressing the Kashmir Solidarity Day rally, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Governor said that hundreds of thousands of Kashmiris were martyred, children orphaned and women were sexually abused at IIOJK.

He said that India's involvement in state terrorism and human rights abuses were serious threats to the world and regional peace. Paying rich tributes to sacrifices, bravery and courage of the oppressed Kashmiris of IIOJK for right of self-determination, the Governor said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government and its people were standing

with oppressed Kashmiris and will always stand with them.

The political, diplomatic and moral support of oppressed Kashmiris would continue, he said. He said the day was not for away when people of IIOJK would get succeed in their legitimate struggle for self determination. He urged international bodies including UNO to address the long standing Kashmir dispute and international human rights bodies to take notice of endless brutalities at IIOJK.

Faiq reaffirms unwavering support to Kashmiris

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Muhammad Faiq Shah, founder and chairman of the Amun Taraqqi Party said that his party stands with oppressed nations, particularly support Kashmiris in their movement for right to self-determination and it had given a viable roadmap of foreign policy in the party's manifesto.

The ATP chief suggested that the ministry of foreign affairs (MoFA) should set up a special desk across the world to highlight the Indian's atrocities against innocent people of Kashmir and illegal occupation of the Kashmir territory. Shah was speaking at a Kashmir Solidarity Rally and seminar on the eve of Kashmir Day on Monday, which is commemorated on Feb 5 across Pakistan.

A large number of party's activists, people from different walks of life, social activists, political workers and others participated. Participants of the rally carry placards and banners yell various slogans in favour of people of Kashmir and against the Indians' barbarism by Indian troops on innocent Kashmir for the last several decades.

Modi led the Indian government and its forces committed state terrorism with Muslim, especially people of Kashmir by occupying Kashmir territory, the speakers said during speeches in the rally. They said all basic human rights have been snatched from Muslims and people of the occupied Kashmir.

The speakers demanded the international human rights organizations and Muslim world to ensure all fundamental and constitutional rights to people of Kashmir and resolve the core issue of Kashmir as per wishes of people of Kashmir or U.N relevant resolutions. Earlier, the ATP leaders addressing a seminar with regard to 'Kashmir Solidarity Day' vowed their unflinching support to people of Kashmiris in their decade-long movement for the right to self-determination.

Shah suggested a joint policy should be devised at government and foreign policy level by inclusion of Kashmiris leadership to put the core issue of Kashmir in the United Nations in a befitting manner. Today, children, women and elderly have been marooned by over 1.2million troops in the occupied Kashmir, the ATP chief said, adding that the entire occupied Jammu and Kashmir has been turned into an open-air prison for its residents since India illegally revoked the special status of occupied Kashmir.

WUS observe Kashmir Day

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Women University Swabi commemorated Kashmir Day, organized by the Directorate of Public Relations and Youth Development Center on Monday. The event featured English and Urdu essay writing, as well as a video competition among students.

In the Urdu essay category, Suma Chameli from the Urdu department secured the first position with her submission.

Kashmir solidarity day observed in KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Like other parts of Pakistan and Azad Kashmir, the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Monday observed Kashmir solidarity day by holding big protest rallies and demonstrations, condemning the illegal annexation of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir and demanded UNO to implement its resolutions on Kashmir.

From Chitral to Waziristan and Kohistan to Khyber, big protest demonstrations and rallies attended by people of all walks of life were held in all 37 districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where people expressed solidarity with oppressed Kashmiris of IIOJK, who faced unending brutal oppression, human rights abuses and organized state terrorism for the last 77 years with steadfastness and bravery.

Every year, the people of Pakistan observed February 5 to expressed solidarity with oppressed Kashmiris of IIOJK. Big protest demonstrations and rallies were held at Peshawar, DI Khan, Chitral, Abbottabad, Mardan, Swat, Khyber, Manshera, Kohat, Bannu, Charsadda, Dir Lower, Malakanad, Hangu, Bajaur and others districts of KP where people raised placards and banners inscribed with slogans like 'Kashmir Banay Ga Pakistan and India Go Out of Kashmir'.

In Peshawar, a big protest demonstration started from Chief Minister Secretariat paraded up to Governor House Peshawar. The participants of the central rally led by Governor KP Haji Ghulam Ali and Information Minister Feroz Jamal Kakakhel were holding placards and banners condemning the illegal annexation of Kashmir by India and expressed solidarity with the oppressed Kashmiris.

Besides others, caretaker provincial ministers, advisers, assistants, civil society members, lawyers, officials, journalists and general public participated in the rally with full throated slogans "India Go out of Kashmir,". The rally condemned organized state terrorism and human rights abuses at IIOJK and urged International Community including UN Security Council to implement its resolutions on Kashmir.

Misal Khan, a retired information officer said that fascist Modi regime has broken all records of atrocities and organized state terrorism at IIOJK where Indian occupation forces were using human rights abuses against women and children as a weapon of war in a bid to suppress the indigenous freedom movement there but failed. He said unlimited restrictions on free media imposed by the RSS backed Modi regime in IIOJK was meant to hide its forces Israel like war crimes at IIOJK.

He said nearly one million Indian occupation forces have unleashed terror and killed hundreds of thousands of Kashmiris in fake encounters and extra judicially as evident of young freedom fighter Burhan Wani and



jailed hurriet leader Yasin Malik in a fake case. Farooq Rehman, Chairman Jammu and Kashmir Peoples' Freedom League said the people of Kashmir wanted to join Pakistan as per Indo-Pakistan partition plan and started freedom struggle against Maharaja Hari Singh and illegal occupation of India after the latter illegally entered in troops at Srinagar on October 27, 1947.

"The Maharaja's authority over Jammu and Kashmir state was officially ended on August 15, 1947 and people of Kashmir was left with no choice but to stood up against Maharaja Hari Singh's illegal move and India's forced occupation." He said that on January 1, 1948, it was India that brought the Kashmir issue before the UN, where it was agreed by a number of resolutions that the destiny of Jammu and Kashmir would be decided by plebiscite under UN supervision.

Later India had backtracked from all UN resolutions and declined to hold the plebiscite in Kashmir that was share violation of UN charter. On August 5, 2019, he said India abrogated special status of IIOJK attempting to rob Kashmiris of their history, language and identity. The August 5 illegal acts were done with mala-fide intentions, meticulous planning and nefarious designs, he said, adding All the Hurriyat leadership was incarcerated and even politicians like Farooq Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti, who in the past were considered pro Indian government, were arrested.

Thousands of young Kashmiris ranging from 15 to 35 years were picked from their homes and locked in different prisons of India and most of them continue to languish there in inhuman conditions. "The goal was to create a fear-psychosis within the population of held Kashmir, and to convey the message that any person showing semblance of resistance will be dealt with brutal force."

He said great Kashmiri leader Syed Ali Geelani were buried at night after Indian forces snatched his body from his family and Kashmiris were not allowed to attend funeral of their beloved leader. Farooq Rehman said that anybody writing against the occupation forces based on facts is slapped with draconian Unlawful

Public Activity Act (ULPA) and subsequently imprisoned without any judicial reprieve.

He said cordon and search operations are held on a daily basis in all areas of occupied land to create an atmosphere of fear and to arrest or kill youth. During this process, he said properties are destroyed besides human rights abuses against women and youngsters at IIOJK exposed Indian's forces war crimes against humanity. He claimed that all the top-level government positions are held by Hindus from India at IIOJK where local Kashmiri officials are being marginalized. With the influx of a large population of Hindus from India, local Kashmiris find it difficult to compete even for the lower positions in the government.

Rehmani said institutions that were previously under the jurisdiction of IOK (Indian occupied Kashmir) Government are now run by New Delhi and there is assiduous effort to increase the number of Hindu applicants into Medical and Engineering colleges. He said banks in held Jammu Kashmir that used to provide an avenue of employment and funds for the local population has been heavily Indianized and filled with Hindus from India while any financial transaction taking place in administrative sector has to go through Reserve Bank of India besides destruction of agriculture land through construction of unnecessary roads.

The apple production being the main source of income for occupied Kashmiris, is systematically being decimated by many oppressive measures like delaying the harvest and impeding the transportation so that fruit gets destroyed in the process and Kashmiris suffered economic losses while revenue records are being tampered to change the ownership of commercial properties from Muslims to Hindus of India in the held valley.

Meanwhile, Kashmir solidarity rallies were held at Swat, Swabi, Khyber, Waziristan, Nowshera, Malakand, Dir, Abbottabad, Manshera, DI Khan, Kohat and merged tribal districts. The speakers highlighted Kashmir issue and vowed to continue moral and political support to oppressed Kashmiris till achieving freedom from Indian yoke.

HR abuses in IIOJK makes life worst nightmare for oppressed Kashmiris

PESHAWAR (APP): As the sun rays disappear behind Mahadev mountain peak at Srinagar of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), the oppressed Kashmiris are being seen locking doors of houses due to human rights abuses and systematic state terrorism of Indian occupational forces since they invaded the held valley on October 27, 1947.

Breaking all records of oppression, rights violation of modern era, the Indian occupational forces unleashed terror in IIOJK after the fascist Modi government revoked its special status on August 5, 2019, forcing most Kashmiris to spend sleepless nights due to indiscriminate firing, cluster ammunition, sniper attacks, excessive use of pellet guns, fake encounters where women and children were being abducted and sexually assaulted as weapon of war.

Secretary General, World Kashmir Awareness Forum (WKAF), Dr Ghulam Nabi Fai stated that frustration at India's intransigence and the world's hesitation to fulfill its commitment drove the people of Kashmir to be more assertive in their struggle. "In the past 34 years of struggle, since 1990 alone, Kashmiris have suffered loss of more than 100,000 civilians – men, women and children, and have borne the perpetration of countless atrocities by more than 900,000 Indian military and paramilitary forces concentrated in Kashmir as an army of occupation," Dr Fai said.

He regretted that the popular revolt in Eastern Europe countries was observed and reported by international media, but the Kashmir issue has remained largely hidden from the world's view. "This is the reason that New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has cited that news media in Kashmir is at the brink of extinction," Dr Fai said.

Meanwhile, Senior APHC leader and Chairman of Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party (DFP) Shabbir Ahmed Shah has sought intervention of the world community to prevent the robbing of the people of occupied Jammu and Kashmir of their land, identity and integrity by the Modi-led Indian regime. Amnesty International, in its letter co-signed by six organizations,

had recently urged the representatives of G20 member countries on the eve of its summit in New Delhi in September, for the release of jailed human rights defenders and political prisoners.

These organizations included Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances, the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development, CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, Front Line Defenders and Kashmir Law and Justice Project. The organizations had urged the G-20 countries, "to raise these issues directly and forthrightly with the government of India in accordance with their obligations under international law and call on India to adhere to its international legal obligations."

"The voices in this letter resonate with a global call for justice, accountability, and the protection of human dignity in one of the world's most contested territories," the letter stated. Organization of Islamic countries (OIC) has also repeatedly supported Kashmiri people's struggle and called upon India to give Kashmiris their just right to self-determination.

According to Kashmir Media Service, Shah stated, "Coercion, intimidation and harassment of political activists, journalists, rights groups and civil society activists, has been a hallmark of the Modi government's Kashmir policy." Mushtaq Ahmed Shah, Voice Chairman, Jammu and Kashmir's Peoples League told APP that most of oppressed Kashmiris in IIOJK were either being attacked or kidnapped after Indian forces resorted to serious human rights abuses mostly against women and children as weapon of war after Hinduvata BJP regime had abolished special status of IIOJK.

Accompanied by sniffer dogs, Indian occupied forces forcefully entered the houses of Kashmiris even at mid night on the name of so-called search operation and misbehaved with women and children that made Kashmiris almost sleepless. "The 43 page report of the Office of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) 2019 had exposed Indian security forces' systematic terrorism and war crimes at IIOJK," said Mushtaq Ahmad Shah.

The report had testified that Indian

occupied forces had used excessive force and pellet guns against peaceful Kashmiris in 2016, resulting in deaths and injuries of a large number of civilians which was a clear violation of UN Basic Principles on Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, he said. Great Hurriyat leader, Muhammad Yasin Malik was jailed for life in a fake case in a bid to silence his strong voice for Kashmir's freedom and terrorize other Kashmir leadership.

The brutal killing of freedom fighter Burhan Wani and other Kashmiris leadership in a fake encounter besides issuances of over six million illegal domicile certificates of IIOJK to Hindus had exposed the anti-Kashmir's policies of the Hinduvata's regime. He said the gruesome violation of human rights including the forced disappearance of over 8,000 innocent Kashmiris, 8,652 unmarked mass graves, imposition of longest curfew on some 10 million unarmed Kashmiris, extra-judicial killings and human rights abuses especially against women and children exposed India's ugly secular face before the world.

Adnan Sarwar Khan, former Chairman, International Relations Department, University of Peshawar said the illegal occupation of Kashmir valley by India had contravened multiple articles of the 30 fundamental human rights of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) drafted by representatives from all the regions of the world including India on December 10, 1948 and subsequently was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). He said this declaration was applied to all the signatory members of the UN including India and restrained them from all kinds of abuses, exploitation, maltreatment and violence besides violation of any fundamental rights protected in the UDHR. They experts said that four wars were fought on Kashmir dispute and another war would be disastrous between nuclear armed neighboring countries for the peace and stability of the region. They urged UNO to come forward and implement its resolutions on Kashmir for lasting peace and stability in south asia.



PESHAWAR: PPP candidate for NA-32 Abid Ullah Yousafzai addressing party workers during gathering.



In brief

Two die of gas suffocation F.P. Report

ABBOTTABAD: Two people died due to gas leakage in their house in Haveliyan area of Abbottabad on Monday. The bodies of both were shifted to RHC Abbottabad for further legal proceedings. According to police, both of them were sleeping by turning on the heater in a room of their house and both died as a result of suffocation due to gas leakage.

Kashmir Solidarity Day

SIALKOT (INP): The main event was held at Kutcheri Chowk Sialkot in connection with Kashmir Solidarity Day to express solidarity with the Kashmiri people, in which Chief Executive Officer (CEO) education Authority Javed Iqbal, District Officer (DO) Secondary Malik Allahbad and students of various government schools and colleges were present and the people belonging to civil societies participated in large numbers. The students presented speeches and national songs regarding the Kashmir issue. After the ceremony, a rally was also taken out from Chowk Allama Iqbal to the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI). The participants of the rally were carrying placards and banners written against the rights of Kashmiri people and the oppressed people and against Indian aggressions. In the rally, the slogans of "Relationship with Kashmiris, La ilaha illallah, Kashmir bane ga Pakistan" were raised. In the end, prayers were offered for the early independence of Kashmir and the development and prosperity of the nation.

Kashmiris struggle hailed F.P. Report

MARDAN: Additional Deputy Commissioner Finance and Planning Mardan Sami ur Rahman has said that the purpose of Kashmir Solidarity Day is to inform the world about the struggle of Kashmiris for freedom and the atrocities of the Indian army on innocent Kashmiri Muslims. He was speaking at a function organized regarding Kashmir Solidarity Day at Pakhtunkhwa House Mardan. AAC Headquarters Junaid Khalid, AAC Takhtbai Education Department Officers, NCHD Deputy Director Lal Muhammad Khan, District Youth Officer Usman Khan and a large number of school students participated in the event. On this occasion, the students of government schools presented thought provoking sketches and tableaux in which the atrocities of the Indian occupying forces on the Kashmiris were depicted. The students in Urdu and English speeches highlighted the issue of Kashmir and the sacrifices of Kashmiris and expressed their determination that the sacrifices of Kashmiri Muslims will pay off and soon Kashmir will be free. Additional Deputy Commissioner Samiur Rahman inaugurated the photo exhibition organized earlier by the Department of Youth Affairs. The photographs displayed in the exhibition depicted the various stages of the struggle of Kashmiris. Meanwhile, District Police Officer Najib ur Rahman chaired a meeting regarding the code of conduct and police security arrangements issued by the Election Commission of Pakistan in connection with the peaceful conduct of general elections 2024.



LANDI KOTAL: People from different walks of life holding a rally in connection with Kashmir Solidarity Day.

Kashmir Day observed in KKKUK

F.P. Report

KARAK: The Debating Society of Khushal Khan Khattak University, Karak, under the auspices of the Provost Section, organized a spirited rally and debate today to express unwavering solidarity with the Kashmiri people on the occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day. The event witnessed active participation from students, faculty, and administration staff, who joined hands to voice their support for the rights of Kashmiris.

The rally and debates were marked by banners and placards, inscribed with slogans advocating the rights of Kashmiris. Participants eagerly called for global attention towards the ongoing struggle in Kashmir and urged the international community to



stand up for justice.

Dr. Rafiullah Khan, the Registrar of Khushal Khan Khattak University, Karak, delivered a powerful message during the event, reaffirming the university's commitment to provide all moral and legal support necessary to ensure the self-determination of the Kashmiri people. He emphasized the need for collective efforts in addressing the challenges faced by the Kashmiris and called on the international community to uphold the principles of justice and human rights.

In the preceding debates,

students and speakers highlighted the noble cause of the Kashmiris, shedding light on the pressing issues and challenges faced by the region. They appealed to the United Nations and other world organizations to take decisive actions in providing legal rights to the Kashmiri people, particularly the right to self-determination.

As a gesture of recognition for their outstanding contributions, the participants in the debates were awarded certificates, acknowledging their dedication to the cause.

IPP wants stable govt after polls, says Tareen Saqib Mushtaq

LODHRAN: Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) Chief Jahangir Khan Tareen has said that IPP wanted a stable government after general elections 2024 which must complete its five-year term.

Addressing an election rally in Lodhran on Monday, Jahangir Tareen wished that as a result of the general elections a strong government should be formed as a weak one always causes problems and uncertainty in the country.

He said the culture of rumors against the governments in Pakistan is not a good omen and desired a government which must complete its five years in office. Jahangir Tareen said this time Lodhran election will be historic and the IPP will win with big margin. Elaborating his political agenda if voted into power, Tareen reaffirmed that his party would work on improving economic indicators to address unemployment as well as increase the salaries of those who are already employed.

28 policemen injured in road mishap F.P. Report

BUNER: As many as 28 policemen were injured in road mishap when personnel carrying coach collided with truck at Baba Ji Kandao a pass-way between two valleys in Buner district.

According to details, as many as 50 police personnel were present in the carry in the accident bus. According to the incidents, 50 Boner police personnel in a private bus were going to DI Khan for election duty when a cylinder from the opposite direction hit Babaji Kundao. As a result, 28 police officers in the bus were injured. The injured officers were taken to the district headquarters hospital in rescue ambulances.

There are reports that many of the officers were seriously injured. The bus and truck were badly injured. DPO Shah Hasan Khan arrived at the spot and supervised the rescue operation while talking to the media. Police officials, political and social figures and the people of the area reached the accident site and went to Daggar Hospital and gave blood donations.

Admn observes Kashmir Solidarity Day F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SING: A rally was organized with reference to Kashmir Solidarity Day under the leadership of Assistant Commissioner and Administrator Municipal Kamalia, in which tehsil officers, employees, civil society, lawyers, media representatives and students participated, on Monday.

Addressing the participants in the rally, Assistant Commissioner Ghazala Yasin said that the purpose of observing the Solidarity Day on February 5 is to raise voice in favor of the oppressed Kashmiris of Indian Occupied Kashmir.

Pakistan is being ruled by few capitalists and landlords: Siraj

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Jamaat-i-Islami chief and party candidate for NA 6 Sirajul Haq has said that a few numbers of capitalists and landlords have besieged the 250 million Pakistanis for the last 76 years and it is the time to get rid of them. He was addressing a party workers' rally at Chakdara as chief guest.

The JI Adenzai chapter arranged a reception for Sirajul Haq at Chakdara which was attended by party workers from all parts of Adenzai. The gathering was also addressed by the JI candidate for NA 7 Maulana Dr Muhammad Ismail, PK 15 candidate Azizullah Khan, tehsil chief Bashir Muhammad, Syed Liaqatul Mulk and others. Siraj said the nation had witnessed the governments of the PML-N, PPP and PTI in the past and none of them had the ability to steer the country out of crises.

The JI chief said that during his tenure as the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa senior minister, the University of Malakand, BISE Malakand, Koto hydro power project, upgradation of local hospitals and establishment of new colleges were approved by the government. He said the JI wanted to rid the people from the slavery of the IMF and other global financial institutions. He alleged that the major political parties like PML-N, PPP and PTI had failed to fulfill their pledges made with the nation. He said that all those parties had deceived the nation one way or the other.

The JI chief said that Pakistan had come into being under an Islamic ideology but still there had been the same system in India and Pakistan. He said that inflation, unemployment and lawlessness had disturbed the masses and they wanted to get rid of those menaces. He alleged the United States of America and its leadership wanted to inflict another war in this region which should be thwarted with unity of the nation. He said the JI would work seriously to bring all warring political parties on the same table after the general elections. He said the cooperation and coordination among Pakistan,



Afghanistan, Iran and Gulf States was the need of the hour to sabotage the US nefarious designs in this region.

Siraj asked the participants to convey the JI message and its manifesto to every voter before Feb 8 so that voters would support it for a greater cause. He said the JI would never disappoint the nation if it was given a chance to rule. He said the JI had an expertise in each field with a pious and honest leadership. He said the major political parties had disappointed the nation number by number and they had lost their right to govern any more in the country. The JI chief said the previous rulers were responsible for the whole mess. Without naming Bilawal Bhutto, he said that one of the leaders considered the position of prime minister as his ancestral asset of his grandfather and mother while another one wanted to be made the prime minister for the fourth time. He asked the JI workers to reach each voter and convince them to vote for his party for true change, development and prosperity. The JI chief also condemned the killing of a polls' candidate Rehan Zeb Khan in Bajaur and demanded the government to immediately arrest the killers.

UN urged to take notice of Indian atrocities in IOJK

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Speakers at

a function at Timergara demanded the United Nations Organization and other world bodies to take notice of the Indian atrocities and human rights' violation in the Indian Held Kashmir. The district administration in collaboration with the youth affairs and sports departments arranged the function at the district assembly hall in Balambat to mark the Kashmir Solidarity Day here on Monday. The additional deputy commissioner Abdul Wali Khan chaired the event. Officials of government departments, civil defense volunteers, teachers, students, media representatives, human rights' activists and area elders attended the function.

The district administration media cell presented a documentary about Kashmir while school children presented songs, poems and speeches on the occasion. The participants observed a minute's silence to express solidarity with the Kashmiri brothers and suppress their right to self-determination.

Addressing the participants the ADC Abdul Wali

Khan shed light on the importance of February 5 and said that it was being observed as the Kashmir Solidarity Day because India had illegally occupied Kashmir on October 27, 1948, against the will of the Kashmiri people and violated the international law. He said the special status of Kashmir was abolished through Articles 370 and 35A due to which Kashmiris were confined in their homes till today. "The United Nations and the international community should play a fair role regarding Kashmir and ensure the implementation of their resolutions", he vowed.

District youth officer Malik Shehzad Tariq said that India was violating international human rights in Occupied Kashmir. He said the people of Pakistan stood by Kashmiris and would continue their moral, political and social support to them. Prominent poet Muslim Wisal said that the purpose of celebrating the day was to assure the Kashmiri brothers that all Pakistanis, especially the youths, would raise their voice for Kashmir at every forum.

Appreciation certificates and trophies were distrib-

uted among the participants and school children by the district administration and youth department for presenting good speeches and national songs. Later the participants also held a walk and chanted slogans in favour of the Kashmiris and against the Indian troops.

Meanwhile the youth affairs department and the Lower Dir traffic police also arranged a motorcycle rally to express solidarity with Kashmiris. The ADC Abdul Wali Khan led the rally. Rescue 1122 also observed the day by holding a solidarity rally at Timergara. The district emergency officer Ibrar Ali led the rally.

Constable killed: A police constable identified as Sabz e Ali was killed while another cop Ajmal was injured when an explosive device went off at Zulam on Timergara Peshawar road here on Monday. According to Rescue 1122 officials the bomb disposal unit was trying to defuse the device on the bank of the Panjkora river at Zulam when it suddenly went off. The Rescue team shifted the martyred and injured cops to the district headquarters hospital Timergara.

DRO humiliates polling staffs in name urgent meet

F.P. Report

THATTA: A sudden call given by district returning officer to election staff of Thatta district caused unrest among those living in the far-flung areas of the district.

The sources revealed that the election staff that had got training received a WhatsApp message from their concerned department to reach at Government Girls High School Thatta on Sunday morning. The staff residing in remote areas faced a host of problems to reach Thatta.

A teacher from Jughshahi area of district Thatta said, "It was raining when I embarked on my journey to Thatta, they have not given any prior notice to us", he mentioned. Spokesperson of DRO said that those evading election duties would face strict legal action.

The election staff reached at their destination at around 9:00 PM in the morning but kept waiting for the authorities concerned to arrive. "After hours long wait we were handed over the list of respective polling stations

where have to perform our duty"; said some teachers standing in a queue to mark their attendance.

Chief Election Commissioner Thatta said that; The number of total polling station in Thatta was 450. Adding that 31 of them have been declared sensitive. A total of 4,351 election staff would be performing their duties across the district on election day he informed. The election Commissioner said that the absent staff would face stern legal action and strict measure were being taken to insure their attendance.

Solidarity rallies with Kashmiris held

F.P. Report

SUJAWAL: Rallies were taken out in different localities of district Sujawal to express solidarity with suppressed Kashmiri brethren. The participants condemned the atrocity of Indian government and demanded the right of self-determination for the people of Kashmir.

The rally in Sujawal the district headquarters was led by Additional Deputy Commissioner Sujawal Abdul Karim Sangrasi, District Education Officer Piyar Ali Khawaja among others. The protests chanted vociferous slogans against Indian

Government and urged UNO authorities to intervene for amicable settlement of Kashmir issue.

Addressing the rally ADC Abdul Karim Sangrasi said that Indian Government had been infringing human rights for the past 76 years but international community had kept mum over it.

Sindh CM directs admn to strengthen security of sensitive polling stations

F.P. Report

SUKKUR: Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (Retd) Maqbool Baqar has directed the administration that the Sukkur Division has 916 sensitive and 830 highly sensitive polling stations, therefore security plan for the polling station must be effective so that no untoward incident could take place.

The meeting was attended by Minister Information Ahmad Shah, Chief Secretary Dr Fakhre Alam, IG Police Riffat Mukhtar, Commissioner Waheed Shaikh, DIG Hameed Khoso, and deputy commissioners and SSPs of Sukkur, Ghotki, and Kahipur.

Commissioner Fayaz Abbasi briefing the chief minister said that the Sukuur Division has three districts - Ghotki, Sukkur and Khairpur - with seven national and 14 provincial assembly seats. There are 3,040,256 registered voters, including 1628,951 female votes.

The chief minister asked Commissioner Waseem Jafferri of Sukkur if he was



satisfied with the election arrangements. The Election Commission expressed satisfaction and said that he was properly consulted for each and every arrangement. There will be 2,277 polling stations, including 3,761 females and 7901 polling booths, out of which 3761 would be for females.

The CM was told that out of 277 polling stations, 916 are sensitive, and 830 are highly sensitive. Ghotki has 216 polling stations sensitive and 207 highly sensitive. Sukkur has 220 sensitive and 166 highly sensitive polling stations. Similarly, Khairpur has 429 sensitive and 166 highly sensitive polling stations.

Deployment at Polling

stations: DIG Sukkur Hamid Khoso told the CM that a force of 14,479 would be deployed at the polling stations. In Sukkur 186 Rangers, 540 Pak Army and 3290 police men would be deployed. Khairpur would have 198 Rangers, 652 army and 6,021 policemen at their polling stations. In Ghotki 144 Rangers, 504 army and 3794 policemen would perform duties at the polling stations.

To a question the CM was told that there was a close Coordination with Army and Rangers authorities. In consultation with the ECP and civil administration Polling Stations have been finalized and Training of the polling staff has been completed.



DAKAR: Police made arrests and fired tear gas at opposition supporters during protests against the decision by President Macky Sall to postpone Senegal's elections.

Russian authorities cast doubt on antiwar hopeful's election bid

MOSCOW: The Central Election Commission (CEC) of Russia has found flaws in documents backing Boris Nadezhdin's bid to run in next month's presidential vote, he has said. The CEC informed the aspiring antiwar candidate on Monday that it had found 15 percent of the signatures he submitted to access the electoral race to be invalid, Nadezhdin said. The commission could now block his bid to enter the election.

The municipal councillor, a prominent critic of President Vladimir Putin, has caught the attention of Russia's small opposition forces with promises to end the war in Ukraine. He has virtually no chance of unseating Putin, but it is thought that authorities would not welcome a candidate who would introduce antiwar rhetoric in the race for the March 15 election. Nadezhdin, running on the ticket of the small centre-right Civic Initiative party, last week submitted

the 100,000 signatures required to register. However, the CEC does not tolerate more than a 5 percent error.

"The CEC working group reported 15 percent of defects in the signatures that I have submitted on January 31," Nadezhdin said on his Telegram channel. Such a level of invalid signatures would provide grounds for the CEC to disqualify him from running. "If the Central Electoral Commission refuses to register me I will appeal the decision to the Supreme Court," Nadezhdin said. The CEC's final ruling on the matter is expected on Wednesday, a spokesperson for Nadezhdin said. Putin will be running as an independent, rather than as the candidate of the governing United Russia party, meaning he needs 300,000 signatures to support his candidacy. He has already collected more than 3.5 million, according to his supporters.

It is thought virtually

certain that Putin will win re-election to extend his rule over Russia for at least another six years. Officials had already expressed doubt over the validity of 60-year-old Nadezhdin's bid. "When we see dozens of people who are no longer on this earth and they add a signature, that poses questions about the ethical standards being used ... including by the person collecting them," Nikolay Bulayev, CEC's deputy chairman, said. Nadezhdin denied the accusations, posting photographs on Telegram of people queuing to submit signatures.

Nobody expects Nadezhdin to win even if he is allowed to participate, given Putin's long dominance and control of the state. The Kremlin chief is almost certain to win his fifth term as president, extending his 24-year leadership of Russia, including eight years as prime minister. But Nadezhdin's campaign has captured peo-

ple's attention because of his strong opposition to what the Kremlin calls its "special military operation" in Ukraine. He says Putin made a "fatal mistake" by launching the conflict and has pledged to end it via negotiation.

Nadezhdin - born in Soviet-ruled Uzbekistan to a Jewish mother who was a music teacher and a physicist father - has spent the last 30 years in Russian politics, working as a councillor in the town of Dolgoprudny outside Moscow. His bid raises the question of just how far the Kremlin would let him go at a time when speaking out against the conflict is politically fraught, often landing critics in prison. Putin has not allowed real electoral opposition in his 24-year rule, with rivals such as opposition leader Alexey Navalny behind bars. Navalny's wife Yuliya signed her name in support of Nadezhdin in a symbolic photo posted by the jailed critic's ally. — Aljazeera

Dozens detained as Russian troops' wives call for their return from Kyiv

KYIV (AP): More than two dozen people, mostly journalists, were detained at a protest in central Moscow, as wives and other relatives of Russian servicemen mobilized to fight in Ukraine called for their return, according to independent Russian news reports.

The relatives gathered to lay flowers at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, just outside the Kremlin walls. They marked 500 days since Russian President Vladimir Putin in September 2022 ordered a "partial mobilization" of up to 300,000 reservists following battlefield setbacks in Moscow's full-scale war against Ukraine. The call-up was widely unpopular and prompted hundreds of thousands to flee abroad to avoid being drafted.

Wives and relatives of some of the reservists called up in 2022 have campaigned for them to be

discharged and replaced with contract soldiers. Demonstration was organized by one such campaign group, The Way Home, that posted on Telegram calling on "wives, mothers, sisters and children" of reservists from across Russia to come to Moscow to "demonstrate their unity." "We want our husbands back alive," one of the protesters, who only gave her name as Antonina for fear of reprisals, is heard saying in a video published by independent Russian news outlet SOTAvision. Antonina insisted she does not want compensation from the Russian government if her husband is killed, and said she would instead "either go to a convent or follow him."

"I don't want to live alone! And if (Russian authorities) don't understand this ... I don't know. God be their judge," she told a SOTAvision reporter,

struggling to hold back tears. Demonstration was the ninth and largest of similar weekly gatherings organized by The Way Home. One popular Russian Telegram news channel estimated that some 200 people turned out. Allies of jailed Kremlin foe Alexei Navalny and Russian opposition politician Maksim Kats voiced support for the protest, while the Moscow prosecutor's office early warned Russians not to participate in "unauthorized mass events."

According to OVD-Info, an independent website that monitors political arrests in Russia, police detained 27 people during the protest, mostly journalists. According to Sota, most were later released, although a male protester, Yaroslav Ryazanov, was still in detention. Aware of the public backlash, the Russian military has since

late 2022 increasingly sought to bolster the forces in Ukraine by enlisting more volunteers. The authorities claimed that about 500,000 signed contracts with the Defense Ministry last year. Still, the wives' and relatives' calls to bring mobilized reservists home have been stonewalled by Russia's government-controlled media, and some pro-Kremlin politicians have sought to cast them as Western stooges. Protesters angrily rejected the accusation.

Maria Andreyeva, whose husband and brother are fighting in Ukraine, told SOTAvision that she saw the fighting in Ukraine as "a great tragedy that happened between two brotherly peoples." "Almost every Russian has relatives in Ukraine, close and distant, so... this is a situation that has struck us to the core.

'Ukraine war: No more easy deals'

KYIV (BBC): Russia has been releasing prisoners to fight in Ukraine for more than a year, originally offering them a pardon and freedom after six months, even if they have been convicted of a violent crime. But the BBC has discovered this deal is a thing of the past. Now, they no longer get a pardon, face tougher conditions and instead of going home early, they must fight until the end of the war.

"If you sign up now, be ready to die," writes a man called Sergei in a chatroom for former Russian prisoners fighting in Ukraine. He says that since October he's been part of a new type of army unit with the name "Storm V" which convicts are now being assigned to. "Before you could wing it for six months. But now, you have to make it until the end of the war," he writes.

When the mass recruitment of Russian prisoners started in the summer of 2022, it was led by Yevgeny Prigozhin, once the head of the Wagner private military group. Prisoners were offered a clean record, full pardon and allowed to go home after six months on the battlefield. Before he died in a plane crash in August, Prigozhin said that almost 50,000 Russian prisoners had been dispatched to the front line under this deal - similar figures have been cited by human rights activists. Thousands of those prisoners died, but others, including dozens convicted of violent crimes returned home, with some going on to re-offend and even commit murder. The Russian military took over the scheme in February 2023, initially offering the same incentives as Prigozhin.

But the arrangement meant prisoners released to fight could go home after six months and were in a more privileged position than regular soldiers. That upset men who had been mobilised and their families. Now, new conditions for prisoners redress that balance and are far stricter. From reviewing messages in chatrooms and speaking to fighters and relatives, the BBC can confirm that Storm V troops are currently serving along the front line, from Zaporizhzhia in the south of Ukraine to Bakhmut in the east.

One woman from the Transbaikal region in Russia's Far East, who wished to remain anonymous, told the BBC her husband was recruited into one of the Storm V squads at the beginning of autumn 2023. She would not reveal what crime he had committed, but said it was "a serious charge". She said they made the decision together that he would fight in Ukraine, believing it would result in a quicker release. "This February would have been 15 years since he was sentenced. He had another four to go," she said. "Conditions in the prison were OK. He could have continued to serve his sentence, but this was the only way to get him home quickly."

She said his contract with the Russian Ministry of Defence was for a year, not six months, as it was for previous prisoners. And when her husband's time is up, he won't get a pardon and won't be able to go home immediately as the contract "will be automatically extended".

UK warns of food crisis triggered by war in Ethiopia

LONDON (BBC): In Ayder hospital in Mekelle, the capital of Ethiopia's Tigray region, the corridors are filled with the hubbub of any busy medical facility. But in the paediatric wing, there is a stillness to the wards. For here lie children numbly bearing witness to the latest food crisis to ravage northern Ethiopia. Mostly babies, they are suffering from severe acute malnutrition.

Their mothers sit silently at their beds, staring into the middle distance, clutching their infants to their breast, hoping what milk they have can deliver the salvation for which they yearn. For they and Ethiopia are suffering once again from a devastating legacy of conflict and drought, twin evils that in recent years have destroyed farms and crops and forced millions from their homes.

The government says 16 million people across the country are facing food shortages, with almost half of those suffering emergency or severe levels of food insecurity. That means many are not just hungry, they are starving. This is why Tsega Tsigabu, 23, and her four-month-old son, Kidisty, are languishing in Ayder hospital. Her family were farmers. But their crops failed and they moved to Mekelle to try to survive. Like so many others, they ended up in a camp for people forced from their homes.

Mrs Tsega's husband was in the army but he injured his hand and cannot work. She took her baby for a vaccination and the nurses saw instantly it was malnourished. "Even when I was pregnant, I was not eating a balanced diet," Mrs Tsega tells us. "I was not producing enough breast milk, that's why the baby has developed malnutrition. I just didn't have enough to eat at home." Doctors at the hospital tell us the numbers of severely malnourished children being admitted have doubled since 2020 when the war between Tigrayan forces and

Ethiopian and Eritrean armies began.

A ceasefire was agreed in 2022 but the impact of the conflict still lingers with at least one million people still unable to return home remaining in the region. We travelled with the British Africa minister, Andrew Mitchell, to Agulae, an hours' drive north into the hills, where a clinic was assessing children from outlying villages. He watched as anxious mothers lined up to have the circumference of their children's arms measured; the less flesh on the bone, the more likely the malnutrition. The nurses showed him their charts and they all told a similar story of the numbers getting worse.

"There is a real risk of famine if we don't now take action," Mr Mitchell told the BBC. "There are serious indicators of the danger of famine. If you ask me, 'Is there a famine taking place now in Ethiopia?' I say no, and we have the power to stop it. But if we don't take the necessary action now, then there is every danger that a famine will engulf this war-torn country which has suffered so much already." He promised Britain would commit a further £100m (\$125m) to help up to three million mothers and babies in Ethiopia get access to health care; a new fund to provide medicines and vaccines designed to end preventable deaths.

But is famine in Ethiopia really likely? International aid agencies are cautious about using what some call "the F- word". It has a precise technical definition - 20% of households facing extreme food shortages, 30% of children under five with acute malnutrition, and two people out of every 10,000 dying every day. Few suggest those criteria have been formally met in Ethiopia. But for Getachew Reda, president of the Tigray interim regional administration, those definitions are otiose.

He told the BBC there was an "unfolding famine" in Tigray. The numbers of those "staring death in the eye" were rising all the time, he told us, criticising the international community for its "lacklustre" response. "One thing I know is that thousands of people who would otherwise have been able to feed themselves are not in a position to feed themselves and are succumbing to death because of starvation," Mr Getachew said. "Whether you call it famine or a risk of famine or a potential famine, for me it's purely academic... What transpired in 1985, for example, would pale into comparison, if we fail to address the kind of unfolding famine that's staring us in the eye."

What he was referring to were the devastating crises of the mid-1980s when many hundreds of thousands died in a famine in Tigray and elsewhere. The BBC's powerful reporting of the humanitarian disaster prompted a wave of publicity and campaigning, including the Live Aid concert led by the musician Bob Geldof. These comparisons infuriate the federal government in Addis Ababa which denies there is famine.

Shiferaw Teklemariam, commissioner of the Ethiopian disaster risk management commission, said Ethiopia was a victim of climate change. He warned regional governments against politicising the issue and urged them and the international community to do more. "There is a drought, no famine," Mr Shiferaw told the BBC. "The government is responding very seriously, but at the same time we call on all stakeholders to do their share." There are politics here. Past famines in Ethiopia have sometimes been linked to the downfall of governments. Analysts say the word makes the current administration - led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed - nervous.

Brazil sees dengue cases quadruple

BRASILIA (AFP): The number of dengue fever cases in Brazil since January 1 is four times higher than the same period last year, government data showed, ahead of the launch of a vaccination campaign.

In the first four weeks of 2024, 262,247 probable cases were recorded, compared to 65,366 in the same period last year, according to the latest figures available from the Brazilian Health Ministry's database.

Fabio Baccheretti, president of the National Council of Health Secretaries, pointed to high temperatures as a major factor behind the spread of the mosquito-borne illness. "The record temperatures at the end of last year, with the El Nino phenomenon, are a new and determining factor," he told AFP.

Dengue fever has killed 29 people this year in Latin America's largest country, and an additional 173 deaths are being evaluated

for possible links to the disease. Mosquito-borne dengue, which can cause hemorrhagic fever, infects an estimated 100 million to 400 million people yearly around the world, although most cases are mild or asymptomatic, the World Health Organization says.

"We are seeing that dengue is spreading in areas that were previously free in Brazil, so we must follow this phenomenon closely," Baccheretti warned. Health services are already under strain in many metropolitan areas in Brazil due to the rising caseload.

In the capital district of Brasilia, a field hospital will begin receiving dengue patients starting next week. The most affected state thus far is southeast Minas Gerais, the second most populated in Brazil, with more than 88,587 probable cases reported. Outside the state capital of Belo Horizonte, teams of fumigators are going door-to-door as part of a campaign against dis-

ease-spreading mosquitoes. Members are equipped with gas masks and dressed in white head-to-toe coveralls.

"It's sometimes difficult to get into people's homes, but they're starting to see that there are a lot of cases around them and are becoming more understanding," said supervisor Katia Batista. Two weeks ago, the Brazilian government announced that a free vaccination campaign targeting 3.2 million people would take place in February, with priority given to children aged 10 to 14, the group with the highest number of hospitalizations. However, available doses are limited due to a shortage of supply from the vaccine's developer, Japanese pharmaceutical company Takeda, Brazil's health ministry said. In all, the nation of 203 million people expects this year to receive 6.5 million doses of the two-dose vaccine, which is tailored for children.

A year on from Turkey's earthquake disaster, trauma haunts survivors

ISTANBUL: When Elmas Abdulghani has a flashback, her body still shakes like the floor of her apartment on that early February morning a year ago. She was woken up by the screams of her husband, crying: "Elmas, wake up! Save your life!" "I just remember fear and confusion," 35-year-old Abdulghani says, almost tearing up as her mind travels back in time.

Abdulghani's husband did not survive the first magnitude 7.8 earthquake, followed by a second magnitude 7.6 one later in the day and hundreds of aftershocks, that killed more than 50,000 people in southeastern Turkey and northern Syria on February 6 last year. But Abdulghani did and, since that day, she has had to deal with the restlessness of mind that came from losing the love of her life and her home in Gaziantep, an important city in the southeast a few kilometres from the epicentre.

The earthquakes created unimaginable psychological stressors for survivors like Abdulghani, from injuries and lasting fear of aftershocks to experiencing the destruction, displacement and deaths around them. A few weeks after the physical emer-

gency needs were met, groups of volunteer therapists and mental health NGO workers were deployed across the region to support victims and help them process their trauma.

"I've worked on other earthquakes and natural disasters in our country, such as the 1999 earthquake in Izmir, but this was different from any other," says Hayal Demirci, a psychotherapist from the EMDR Trauma Recovery Group, which has deployed teams of mental health workers in tented settlements, container cities, hotels and temporary dormitories since early March last year. In the first few weeks of their deployment, Demirci and more than 1,000 volunteer therapists worked to provide a physically safe environment to reduce people's acute reactions and, after a while, to establish a safe therapeutic bond and work with these reactions.

Demirci explains that when the normal bonds between people disappear, the "There have been way too many losses of family members, friends, limbs, homes, cities and hope for the future. "When these defence mechanisms are active, the sympathetic nervous system is on duty and

... the person [feels] like they are in danger all the time. It's not possible for people who don't feel safe anywhere, at any time, to eat, sleep or meet their basic needs properly," she says. Most people, even after the aftershocks eventually disappeared, felt restless for months.

"Even though my family house was declared safe one week after the earthquake, I still didn't feel safe staying inside," says Mert Ozyurtkan, a 22-year-old engineering student at Gaziantep University. "I would constantly stare at water bottles to see if the water was moving or at ceiling lamps to check if they were swinging slightly. It increased my anxiety levels, and affected my grades." While most mental health support in crises focuses on a short-term, emergency approach, Demirci underlines the importance of continuing to work with victims online to address triggers and control flashbacks to reduce any symptoms.

For some, the earthquake changed entire lifestyles. Neslihan Hicdonmez and her husband Ali Ozaslan started living in a camper van and kept their camping sleeping bags at hand because they no longer felt safe in

their own home. "The earthquake totally impacted our way of living. We had never thought of abandoning our newly bought house, but we constantly live with the fear that something of that magnitude may happen again."

If adults find the effects catastrophic, for children in their early development the disaster left an indelible mark. Sare Bitir, a fourth-grader at Ilkokulu Elementary School in Gaziantep, still brings her doll to school for comfort. "It's the first object I brought with me when we ran out of the house," she says. "It kept me company for three days while we were sleeping in our car because our house didn't make us feel safe. It gives me confidence."

Children are among the most exposed group, says clinical psychologist Zeynep Bahadir, who has expertise in post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and volunteered for six weeks with the Turkish Red Crescent as an emergency online psychologist for families with young children. She adds that whether children have been directly affected or experienced secondary trauma, "they can be at the risk of post-traumatic stress disorder

symptoms, including nightmares and avoidance behaviour". Separation anxiety specifically has shown up in school settings. When she returned to school in September, Sare did not want to enter the class, too afraid to say goodbye to her parents.

It took a very patient teacher and friendly classmates to bring her inside, although, for the first few weeks, she couldn't focus. Some children avoided school for several weeks in a row. According to Bahadir, fear can persist in children long after the earthquake has passed, which "sometimes can be temporary, but can also adapt into their lives forever". The situation has been worse for Syrian refugees in Turkey who fled there during Syria's war, says Yara al-Atrash, a mental health worker at INARA NGO.

Al-Atrash has been in charge of psychological assistance to Syrians living in container camps and assisted many who have lost homes and children, just like they did during the war back home. "Having to live again the trauma of death, loss and displacement, as well as realising that the new place that gave them safety was no longer safe, was a last blow to those

who had survived the Syrian conflict," she says. Abdulghani, who lived through an offensive in her hometown of Homs, Syria, says the earthquakes reawakened traumas she thought she had healed.

She had not sought therapy, even after the war, but her restlessness as the one-year mark since the earthquake neared finally made her seek help about two months ago. Now Abdulghani has been living in Istanbul since February 2023, incapable of returning to Gaziantep and reliving her trauma. In therapy, she hopes to address this fear to be able to finally return. "Therapy culture is not yet something known in our region, especially in the earthquake zone and villages, which were however the most impacted," Demirci says. Many said they were not ready for therapy, but emergency workers tried to encourage them to speak about their wounds. "Those who do not receive support in the acute period may, in the long term, suffer from addictions, including alcohol and drugs, anger and impulse control problems, or even somatic issues such as fibromyalgia, or migraine," Demirci adds. —Aljazeera

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Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

Printed and published by Mahmood Afridi at Moraka's

Printers, 27 Abdara Road, University Town, Peshawar.

Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001

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

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

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

General elections and need for nationalism

THE February 8 General Elections have reached overhead and the nearly 240 million nation is currently geared up to cast the vote and enjoy the full swing of this nationwide activity that comes after five long years. The Election Commission has already informed about the completion of the training of its over one and a half million election staff while 260 million ballot papers were printed to facilitate the voting for the National Assembly and all four provincial Assemblies in the country. February 8th will be observed as a holiday wherein the provincial and District administrations have already taken all necessary steps to ensure the smooth and peaceful conduct of the Electoral process.

In the majority of parts of the country, strict security measures have been in place inside the polling stations, while the Army and paramilitary troops have been deployed to maintain law and order situations and provide foolproof security to Election staff and transportation of election material. Necessary administrative arrangements have been finalized and all available resources have been deployed to create a conducive environment for all election candidates, voters, and the general public as well. Special focus has been given to safety/ security along with the maintenance of writ of the law at sensitive polling stations amid serious risk of terrorism and violence from proscribed terrorist outfits during the election days. As said, cameras have been installed at sensitive locations for CCTV monitoring, control rooms at the Chief Minister's Secretariat, Home Departments, Ministry of Interior, and emergency services in hospitals have been established to cater for any unforeseen situation during the election.

All that was from the government side, including the ECP, federal and Provincial governments, and district administrations, while the rest of the crucial part dearly needed from the political groups, the election candidates, their workers and supporters, and the general public are still awaited to be honored by the concerned individuals, party and the overall public that will make this month-long exercise successful and high yielding. There is a dire need for collaboration from both candidates and the public to ensure the success of the upcoming general elections. There is a need for cooperation with the administration, police, and election commission staff to guarantee security, seamless logistical arrangements, and overall maintenance of law and order before, during, and after the polls. So, a free, fair, impartial, and credible election could be ensured which provides all contesting political parties and candidates an equal level playing field, whereas, people also exercise their right to vote without any pressure, coercion, and risk of insecurity throughout the electoral process across the country.

As the election date approaches, government departments and LEAs should remain vigilant to foil the attempts of anti-state elements, miscreants, and criminals so they cannot derail this process through terrorist activity by targeting any important political figure, candidate, or political rally. The urgency for striving to create a conducive environment for a democratic and peaceful electoral process has much importance. Significantly, the candidates and civic groups must adhere to Election Commission SOPs and work closely with the administration to maintain a secure and orderly electoral process. Whilst, the need for the government, public, and contesting parties' collaboration is of utmost importance to safely and smoothly steer from this important constitutional process. This teamwork and cooperation is also vital for the forthcoming transition and success of the newly elected government. So, that performs well and delivers to the public during its term in office. All that is the beauty of democracy and the essence of patriotism and nationalism of a nation in the contemporary world.

Doha conference on Afghanistan

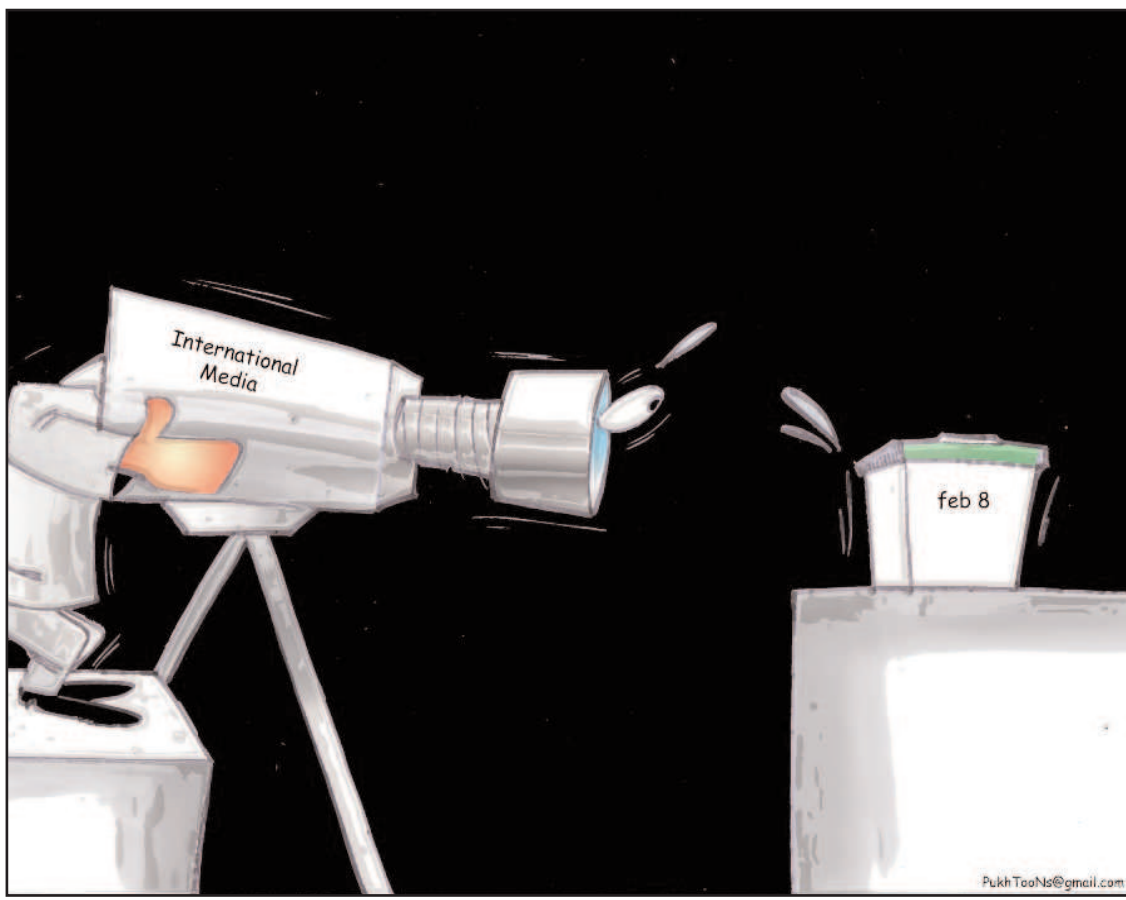
ACCORDING to the media, during a meeting with the Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the Afghan caretaker Foreign Minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi asked the UN official to brief the Afghan authorities about the agenda of the Doha Conference on Afghanistan. According to Muttaqi, the Islamic Emirate delegation will consider its participation in the meeting based on the briefing. Mr Muttaqi also expressed the Islamic Emirate's stance regarding the UN Security Council Resolution 2721 and emphasized the constructive interaction between the Islamic Emirate and the UN.

The UN-led Doha conference on Afghanistan is scheduled to be held on 18-19 February in Doha Qatar. This will be the second meeting of its kind under the UN Secretary-General's initiative on Afghanistan. Previously, about 25 countries from across the world including donor nations, P5, and Afghanistan's neighbouring States attended the May 2023 huddle in Qatar but the Taliban was not invited to the meeting, which failed to produce the required results. The policy of isolation and disassociation from Kabul largely proved to be counterproductive for the global community and the Taliban as well, because the South Asian country experienced the worst economic and humanitarian crises, whereas, the Taliban leaders resorted to their previous policies concerning human and women rights, political exclusiveness and single party rule etc. Therefore, the people of Afghanistan have been the biggest victims of the global isolation and containment of their country.

Realistically, the Doha conference is an important global forum that provides equal opportunities to both, the UN-led global community as well as the Taliban-led Afghan government. Through participation in the global huddle, the Islamic Emirate will be able to put its case to the global community, while the rest of the world will have a window to leverage its influence over the Afghan interim government. There will be a bargain, the global community can achieve its agenda while allowing some concessions to the Islamic Emirate. Similarly, Kabul rulers can pave the way for the global recognition of their rule in the country by admitting some demands of the global community. In fact, the world and the Afghan interim government must avail this occasion and open up a window for cooperation that will not only resolve political and security challenges that stemmed out of the country in the past few months but also bring peace and prosperity to the people of Afghanistan, who deserve it most at this point in time.

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What the West gets wrong on Stalin and Putin

Jade McGlynn

LAST month, a new 'Stalin Center' was opened in Barnaul, Siberia. Its aim, like its predecessors' in the Russian cities of Penza and Bor, is to glorify the Communist dictator. Alongside a marked increase in Stalin statues across Russia - more than 100 since 2012 - the Stalin centers appear to affirm a simplistic story: The Kremlin is rehabilitating the 'Vozhd,' or great leader.

But deeper inspection complicates the story. The first Stalin cultural center opened in 2016, in the western Russian city of Penza, with the support of local Communists - but not Russian President Vladimir Putin's United Russia party. The second such center, which opened in 2021 in Bor, also in the west of the country, was originally a private initiative by a local Communist businessman. It began with a statue of Stalin looming over the Volga River. The mayor of Bor even petitioned for its removal, albeit unsuccessfully.

And now the most recent center, in Barnaul. It was established by the Communists of Russia, a radical and marginal Stalinist party that is separate to the much larger pro-Kremlin Russian Communist Party. In other words, these centers, like many of the new Stalin monuments, are not Kremlin-imposed but rather grassroots or at least non-state initiatives. Perhaps this should not be surprising. According to the independent Levada Center, Stalin has taken first place in their 'who is the greatest figure of all times and all people' survey since 2012. Of course, this favorable view is not uncontested. The Russian human rights organization Memorial worked tirelessly for over 30 years to document Soviet crimes, which were widely discussed during the Gorbachev and post-Soviet era.

More recently, Russian journalist and YouTube star Yury Dud powerfully depicted the horrors and legacy of Stalinist Gulag forced labor camps in his 2019 documentary "Kolyma: Birthplace of Our Fear." The YouTube video has over 29 million views. Putin's treatment of Stalin takes both of these stances into consideration.

Rather than a glorification of the Communist dictator, he offers a somewhat equivocating view that strives to placate both pro- and anti-Stalin constituencies within Russian society. To do so, he glosses over but does not deny the large scale of the Communist dictator's terror and repressions. In 2017, Putin unveiled Russia's first monument to the victims of Stalin's repressions in Moscow: the "Wall of Grief." During the opening, he asserted: "We must never again push society to the dangerous precipice of division."

Over his 24 years in power, Putin's rhetoric on Stalin has remained reasonably consistent. He does not deny Stalin's crimes but rather tries to divert attention away from them, admitting the horror of the Gulag and mass repressions

Stalinist repressions.

However, their removal cannot be reduced to the question of Stalin's legacy alone - it can also be seen as an attempt to eliminate evidence of the crimes of the security services, in which Putin's career and power base are rooted. After all, thinking about the individual victims leads to thinking about the individual perpetrators. The erasure of personalized reminders of the Gulag and Terror must be contextualized within the Kremlin's use of history and myth to legitimate the Putinist regime, Russia's war on Ukraine, and the country's great power status. As the prosecutor at Memorial's liquidation trial in 2021 argued: "Memorial besmirches our history. It forces us - a generation of victors and the heirs of victors - to justify our history."

Beyond the drastically different scales of repression, the most obvious one is that Stalinism was a deeply mobilizing ideology that sought to remake man and undertook industrialisation with unprecedented scale and speed.

but insisting that the memory of these crimes should not overshadow Stalinism's achievements. In his view, efforts to overly 'demonize' Stalin are part of an attack on Russia. While Putin has shown little enthusiasm for glorifying Stalin, his government has worked methodically to silence, or at least render abstract, the memory of the Gulag's victims. For example, the "Perm-36" memorial complex, Russia's only remaining intact Gulag, was taken over by local authorities in 2015. When it reopened, individual stories of the prisoners' lives were replaced by content celebrating the prison guards and the camp's contribution to timber production during World War II. Elsewhere, the 2021 shutdown of Memorial - which documented Soviet human rights abuses especially during the Great Terror - and the recent removal of 'last address' plaques marking victims sent to the Gulag, were almost certainly state-directed initiatives that seek to erase reminders of the human cost of

The prosecutor's comments reveal not an ignorance of the dark spots of history but a desire to ignore them. There are obvious parallels with the present day, when many Russians are trying hard to ignore the devastating war their country is waging on neighboring Ukraine.

Certainly, this is a more pertinent point of comparison than the notion that Putin's regime in any way approximates Stalin's. The estimated imprisonment of between 628 and 1,011 political prisoners in today's Russia is a horrific reminder of the brutal authoritarianism with which the Kremlin rules. But to compare it to the millions worked to death in Siberian labor camps or executed in KGB basements is hyperbolic. Moreover, these comparisons divert attention from important differences between the Stalin and Putin regimes. Beyond the drastically different scales of repression, the most obvious one is that Stalinism was a deeply mobilizing ideology that

sought to remake man and undertook industrialisation with unprecedented scale and speed. That is abundantly not the case in Putin's Russia, where the government instead encourages a ritualistic patriotism and political apathy. Such conclusions point to intractable policy and security issues for the West. If Putin was in power solely thanks to the machinery of repressions, then it is not Russia that is a security threat, but his regime. In such a case, the problems posed by his regime would cease to exist when he dies.

Likewise, if one argues that Putin is the only driving force behind Stalin's rehabilitation, then one can also continue the fantasy that, if it weren't for Putin, Russians would embrace Westernized liberal democracy and stop justifying the sacrifice of thousands of lives for the whims of the state. These assumptions are flawed and lacking in nuance, no matter how comforting such a shallow understanding of Russian society might be. The Western tendency to reduce mass-scale crime to an omnipotent leader has always been a misleading one. Even Stalinism was not the work of one man, but of the security services and individuals willing to denounce their fellow neighbors for housing rights or petty grievances, as the Kyiv-born Russian writer Mikhail Bulgakov so mercilessly satires in his short stories of the time. Likewise, efforts to pretend that Putinism is just the work of one man will lead to myopic thinking and poor analytical predictions regarding Russia's future. The question of Putin's position on Stalinism suggests he is far from the all-powerful instigator of a Stalin cult and rather a manipulative manager of divergent, pro- and anti-Stalin societal attitudes, which he tries to balance and fuse into a workable and unifying national narrative. That a notable section of Russian society exudes nostalgia for a leader who repressed millions illuminates pervasive and troubling issues that should inform predictions and planning for a post-Putin Russia. The problem is not just one strongman - it is that so many people wanted a strongman in the first place.

Biopics have a special place in our lives

Yossi Mekelberg

THERE has been hardly any good news to report in recent months. Much of our energy is being consumed by following the wars and conflicts that are dominating our lives, or by struggling with the ever-increasing cost of living that is biting hard and, in the parts of the world where it is still winter, the cold and scarcity of daylight is affecting our mood.

No surprise, then, that we are looking, even if only for brief moments, to escape all of this. And what is more comforting than a good movie? There is no shortage of offerings. In fact, we are spoiled for choice, whether we make the old-fashioned visit to our local cinema or take the indolent option of turning to one of the online movie platforms, stocking up with plenty of popcorn and soda and immersing ourselves in some drama on the screen, after which we feel more able to face the real world more positively. And nothing captures our imagination more than a movie that is based on a true story, in particular a biopic - a movie based on a real life or lives.

This raises the question, if cinema is some sort of escapism, why does it matter to us whether the movie is based on a true story or is a complete fiction? On movie review websites such as Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb, biopics tend to score higher than fiction dramas. Earlier this month, the movie "Oppenheimer" - which follows the life Robert Oppenheimer, the American theoretical physicist credited with being the "father of the atomic bomb" due to his role in the Manhattan Project - dominated this year's Golden Globes and is expected to do well at the Oscars, even though the main protagonist spent most of the rest of his life regretting his contribution to modern warfare.

One of its likely rivals at the Academy Awards is Martin Scorsese's "Killers of the Flower Moon," which is also based on a true story and focuses on a series of murders of members of the Osage Nation after oil was discovered on their land. Another is "Maestro," which focuses on the life of the great American composer and conductor Leonard Bernstein. Should one of these three win in the "Best Movie" category, it would join a long line of successes in this genre, going back to "The Great Ziegfeld" of 1936, which have been not only recognized by the movie makers' peers but have also done very well at the box office. Moreover, statistically, those who star in biopics are more likely both to be nominated and also to win the "Best Actor" prize not only at the Oscars but in any of the big awards ceremonies. No surprise, then, that the industry itself is happy to meet the demand and is producing increasing numbers of biopics.

One explanation for the success of biopics is down to them serving an emotional need, in the nicest possible sense. People like to identify with the range of emotions and the successes and failures of the featured person and, chiefly, their ability to overcome hardship against the odds. Especially as we know that this is no fantasy, but is something that happened to flesh-and-blood people

much like ourselves. And if such people are capable of prevailing despite all obstacles, surely we too can successfully confront our own hardships, big and small. What is more, in fulfilling our need for heroes to inspire us, sometimes both the featured characters and those who play them become our heroes and role models. There is something else that is unique to biographical movies: they are an interface between art, entertainment and the acquisition of knowledge. Some might even regard them as educational, which supplies an added value. It almost makes it more justifiable to spend two or three hours - and biopics tend to be longer than other movies - quenching our thirst for knowledge, while others have done the research for us.

However, biopics can be easily confused with documentaries, which they are not, because their writers and directors allow themselves the artistic freedom not to distort facts, but to dramatize them. The biopic bears more resemblance to the docudrama, which is based on real events and may include interviews with people who have been part of the story, while not necessarily adhering to all the facts. These genres are sometimes more impressionistic than realistic. When much of what takes place around us is uninspiring, we as human beings often need inspiration and biopics give us exactly that. They give us the impetus to believe in a world in which everything is possible if we only put our mind to it and stay resolute. Sadly, we are seldom inspired by our political leaders or those in other walks of life, so why not, in a concentrated and focused way, be inspired by those who have made a huge difference even though they were given a very slim chance of reaching such heights?

Who in our present world could compete in the department of inspiration with the likes of "Lincoln," "Gandhi" or Nelson Mandela in "Long Walk to Freedom"? We also find it comforting that some of our heroes are less than perfect, as we are. They may be geniuses or trailblazers in their own field, such as music, business or sport, but at the same time might even be controversial and struggle, as so many of us do, with other aspects of life. So, watch this space, as this year we can expect an influx of biopics, among whose subjects are the lives of Shirley Chisholm, the first African American woman in Congress, singers Michael Jackson, Amy Winehouse and Maria Callas, and many more.

Some in the film industry argue that the plethora of such movies represents a crisis of self-belief in a business that has lost confidence in fiction scripts and movies based on sheer fantasy, and for whom falling back on stories based on real life seems to be a safer bet. While the popcorn and soda sold in cinemas make more money than the tickets themselves - and while technology continues to change the way we consume entertainment - biopics continue to have a special place in our lives. So, bring them on - the good, the bad and the ugly (which, by the way, was not a biopic).

Taiwan leader shouldn't be a puppet of US

Tommy Suen & Kacee Ting Wong

ALTHOUGH Lai Ching-te has been elected the next leader of Taiwan, his pro-independence stance will further plunge the island into the vortex of Sino-US rivalry. Muddying the political waters further is some US politicians' elusive attempt to build "collective deterrence" against a manufactured delusion of the Chinese mainland's military threat to Taiwan.

That the pro-independence movement in Taiwan poses a serious threat to the core national interests of Beijing and the Chinese people as a whole is evident to all. "Taiwan independence" is regarded by Beijing as a serious threat to the Chinese nation. Outgoing Taiwan leader Tsai Ing-wen's refusal to acknowledge the 1992 Consensus has played a key role in the deterioration of cross-Taiwan Strait relations.

In August 2020, then US secretary of health and

human services Alex Azar made a provocative trip to Taiwan to meet Tsai, making him the highest-ranking US official to visit Taiwan in 40 years. In an effort to boost Taiwan's so-called security, Tsai took steps to upgrade military training and cyber defense. Tsai also supported the anti-Beijing demonstrators in Hong Kong in the second half of 2019. The US policy of "strategic ambiguity" has been further clouded in uncertainty. The White House has expressed a few times that Washington would come to Taiwan's aid in the event of the mainland using "force" to reunify the island with the motherland. The US Congress, too, has adopted a hostile attitude toward Beijing. Following former US House of Representatives speaker Nancy Pelosi's provocative visit to Taiwan in August 2022, Beijing-bashers in the Congress have introduced bills that have further poi-

soned cross-Strait relations. Under the "Taiwan Enhanced Resilience Act" passed in 2022, Washington is committed to providing up to \$2 billion annually in military aid to Taiwan between 2023 and 2027. Recently, the House of Representatives advanced three bipartisan finance bills on Taiwan, bringing legislation to bolster US support for Taiwan. The first bill supports the inclusion of Taiwan as a member of the International Monetary Fund, demonstrating that some US congressmen are still indulging in the fantasy of turning the Taiwan question into an international issue. However, the fact is, the Taiwan question is an internal affair of China which brooks no external interference. There is also an ineluctable risk that some US allies share its threat perception of China. Given these disturbing develop-

ments, Washington should exercise restraint in managing its disputes with Beijing over the Taiwan question and stop taking provocative actions that may result in a mutually destructive cycle of retaliation. As for US allies, they should weigh the pros and cons of giving unconditional support to Washington in cross-Strait affairs. More important, the US allies should not look at the issue through the US' lens.

As University of Colorado professor Steve Chan has correctly pointed out, any objective composite index seeking to capture the balance of threat is not likely to support the claim that China poses a greater threat to other countries than the US. Besides, the failure of the Democratic Progressive Party to retain a majority in the 113-seat local legislature has provided us with the necessary

context without which the balance of power in the legislature in the post-election period cannot be accurately analyzed. And on Thursday, Han Kuo-yu, a former mayor and local leader candidate of Taiwan's main opposition Kuomintang party, was elected as speaker of the island's new legislature. Undoubtedly, Taiwan residents expect the local legislature to address their livelihood issues. Partly due to the above expectations, and partly because of Taiwan's close economic ties with the mainland, the opposition parties could force Lai to adopt a more cautious cross-Strait policies and refrain from provoking Beijing. It is highly likely that Lai will find it difficult to reduce or remove the traditional Chinese elements from the island's culture and education. And the fact that the opposition parties combined have a majority in the legislature means the legislature can order the

formation of an inquiry commission to examine whether the arms procurement agreements with the US contain any unfair and/or discriminatory terms. Legislators from the opposition parties could also push for reforms to allow the island's legislators to maintain regular communication with mainland officials responsible for cross-Strait affairs.

Also, Lai would do good to promote cultural exchanges, allow mainland tourists and students to visit the island and enroll in Taiwan universities. And hopefully, he will also allow think tanks on both sides of the Strait to attend seminars together, and allow researchers to focus on the implementation of "one country, two systems" on the lines of the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions and promote the peaceful reunification of the Chinese nation.

The China Daily

Tory party’s total surrender is paving way for a British Trump

Allister Heath

THERE are two viable ways to respond to an existential threat in the state of nature: fight or flight. You either destroy your predator, or you run away. You don't just stand still, wave a white flag and wait for the end. The same is true in the political jungle, and yet the Tories' nervous systems are now so dysfunctional that they have produced neither of the rational physiological responses to the terrifying likelihood of a Labour landslide.

Rather than launching the fight of its life, the Government's reaction has been to freeze, to keep making the same mistakes, to double-down on the same flawed strategy, to do little and to say even less; as political death wishes go, this one takes some beating.

Wouldn't it at least make sense to try not to lose the election, and to declare total war against the Labour Party, the Left-wing lawyers, the socialist civil servants and the woke Blob? Would it not be a good idea to seek to regain the initiative or to mould the news agenda? Such an obvious approach is apparently too arduous, too politically incorrect: it's less controversial to roll over and accept defeat. The Tories cannot even organise a proper putsch: Sir Simon Clarke's half-hearted attempt at ousting Rishi Sunak was never going to succeed. Clarke is right that the Tories' current strategy guarantees an electoral massacre - almost all Conservative MPs privately agree - but his colleagues won't remove the Prime Minister. Apart from anything else, a successful coup requires a leader in waiting who could gain the support of enough MPs while promising significant improvement in the polls.

The Tories are so divided between their three warring factions - the woke Lefties who wouldn't be out of place in the Liberal Democrats, the centrist careerists, and the squabbling Right-wingers - that they would find it impossible to agree on a successor, let alone to back the sorts of policies that the public might actually want. Sunak's greatest mistake is an analytical one. He doesn't understand that Britain's centre-Right electorate - in common with its counterparts in other Western democracies - has changed dramatically. Potential Tory voters used to be broadly supportive of authority and opposed to Left-wing attempts at disrupting the status quo; today, they are largely insurgents who feel under pressure from a hostile Leftist elite and who believe the economy and society to be broken.

Republican primary voters are now certain to reselect Donald Trump; on the Continent, euro-sceptic parties are on the rise everywhere, fuelled further by an eruption of farmers' protests across Europe. Old centre-Right parties are dying or have entirely reinvented themselves, and populist politics continues to gain ground. The British electorate thought that it was voting for change in 2016 and 2019, but was severely disappointed. Its appetite for radicalism hasn't waned. It is preparing to punish the Tories for their betrayal, but it hasn't fallen in love with Keir Starmer, a central figure in the Left-wing, business-as-usual establishment it has come to despise.

British centre-Right voters want competent leadership, but above all radical change. They are desperate for politicians who break the mould,

who defy the establishment. They are extremely angry at the state of Britain, and at the record of all the political parties. They are, in other words, and whether we like it or not, on the hunt for a British Trump. To be clear, I don't mean somebody who cannot tell the truth, or who cannot accept defeat at elections. I mean somebody who, like the former US president, is an outsider, isn't the product of Westminster, who "tells it as it is", who is pro-growth, who isn't hamstrung by net zero or human rights laws, and who would be willing to do what it takes to crack down on crime and regain control of immigration.

Sunak briefly dabbled with a more popular approach to politics, but didn't communicate it well and quickly reverted to type. He represents a technocratic version of the centre-Right that is actually not very good at solving complex technical problems and which has no future. It can't truly address immigration, increase growth, build more homes, tackle extremism, reform the NHS properly, reduce welfareism or even fix potholes. The PM's situation is thus disastrous. The recent YouGov MMR poll in The Telegraph put the Tories on 26 per cent of the vote, even with relatively benign assumptions; the most recent regular YouGov poll has them on 20 per cent. Redfield & Wilton on 22 per cent and WeThink on 23 per cent.

These are apocalyptic numbers, and they have been trending downwards. The best that the Tories can now hope for is a 1997-style disaster, when they collected 30.7 per cent of the vote; this truly would

represent a miraculous recovery, given how badly they are performing in the polls. The worst case scenario would be a replay of the 1993 Canadian general election, when the ruling Progressive Conservatives were wiped out, holding just two seats on 16 per cent, thanks to the emergence of a new Right-wing party appropriately called Reform, which grabbed 18 per cent and 52 seats. The parallels with the present situation are uncanny: the Progressive Tories had triumphed in the previous election with 43 per cent of the vote, exactly Boris Johnson's share.

A crucial question is whether Nigel Farage properly re-enters the fray at the head of his very own Reform party. He isn't quite a British Trump - his appeal is more narrowly on the Right - but he may very well be elected in Clacton and would undoubtedly give his party a huge boost. The Tories fell to 165 seats in 1997 (out of 659) and 156 (out of 670) in 1906; their floor this time around could be substantially lower. In the short-term, the Government needs some high-profile Rwanda deportations, a game-changing abolition of inheritance tax, and extended scrutiny of Labour's more unpopular policies if it is to avoid obliteration. But unless it embraces a very different approach, the most successful political party in history may finally have had its day. New political vehicles can emerge even under first past the post, as the rise of the Labour Party in the 1920s demonstrates, and the gap in the marketplace is just as wide 100 years on. Will the next conservative Prime Minister really be a member of the Conservative party?

The Telegraph

What explains Nikki Haley’s new tone

Julian Zelizer

REPUBLICAN presidential candidate Nikki Haley is finally unleashing on her opponent, former President Donald Trump. Although she spent much of her time during the Iowa caucuses and New Hampshire primary focused on Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, generally avoiding being very tough with the former president or going so far as to defend him during his legal problems, now she has changed her tone.

In a pre-taped interview with Charlamagne tha God on "The Breakfast Club" that aired Wednesday morning, Haley lit into Trump without much restraint, calling him "toxic" and saying that he lacked "moral clarity." He "broke" things and divided people, she said. Haley has unveiled a series of video ads mocking President Joe Biden and Trump, calling them "grumpy old men." She questioned Trump's mental condition for the first time last month, stirring concerns about mistakes and misstatements that he has been making on the campaign trail - not under the guise of spreading disinformation but because, she maintained, he is too old to handle this job. When Trump appeared to confuse her with former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi during a speech about January 6, Haley jumped at the opportunity to criticize him.

"The concern I have is," she said, "I'm not saying anything derogatory, but when you're dealing with the pressures of a presidency, we can't have someone else that we question whether they're mentally fit to do so."

According to Haley, Trump is too busy raising money to pay for his ballooning legal expenses to focus attention on the campaign. She has been warning conservative donors that Trump's nomination could easily cost the GOP control of the House. We don't know for sure why Haley has decided that the time has finally come to directly take on the former president and avoid the sort of milquetoast statements that had thus far characterized her campaign rhetoric.

Obviously, the fact that Gov. DeSantis and all the other Republicans have dropped out of the compe-

titition fundamentally changed the nature of the game. No longer having to compete to win over the "anti-Trump" vote, which she now owns, the former ambassador can turn all of her attention and firepower in a different direction. Haley must also realize that the risk of angering Trump voters has become less potent than the potential gain from solidifying and energizing those in the party who want a different choice. Under current conditions, Haley needs support from those factions of donors and voters who can sustain her run as long as possible, perhaps anticipating the potential for a legal conviction to render his candidacy untenable.

With this mindset, the goal is not to defeat Trump in the next few rounds of competition, but to remain credible enough with those who dislike him to survive for another day. The only way to do this is to distinguish what she offers from what Trump has promised - avoiding the trap DeSantis fell into of thinking that being "Trump-lite" could have appeal when the real Trump was already on the ballot. After watching Trump, as well as her Tea Party colleagues, Haley has seen how provocative and controversial statements, along with smash mouth attacks, are the best way to keep the eyes of the press upon her. Questioning Trump's mental dexterity is literally taking a page out of her opponent's playbook.

Some of her switch in tone is also a sign of sheer desperation. Despite all of her optimism, she and her team understand that the odds of her winning are extraordinarily low. She lost in the one state - New Hampshire - where she stood the likeliest chance of winning, and Trump performed as well as he needed to in order to demonstrate that his support among primary voters is solid. Polls show her trailing Trump in a number of states. Her only hope is to develop an effective and blistering line of attack that devastates Trump's brand value. But, if the latest Washington Post-Monmouth University poll is any indicator, the new tactic is coming quite late. The poll ahead of the February 24 South

Carolina primary shows Trump holds a sizeable 26-point lead over Haley in the state.

Trump, who probably sensed that his criminal trials offered a platform to advance his narrative about being the true anti-establishment figure and who figured out, through his appearances in the courtroom and refusal to debate the other Republican candidates, how to dominate the media stage, has solidified his position among those who are coming out to vote. He has also successfully sold a narrative about himself. Rather than being a one-term president who cost his party power on Capitol Hill and faces unprecedented legal charges (he denies all wrongdoing), Trump has used the last few months to falsely sell himself to Republican voters as a victim: he is the victim of a stolen election, he is the victim of a president out to get his opponent, he is even a victim of a Republican establishment desperate to bring him down so that they can protect Wall Street and war making.

While it doesn't take much research to demonstrate how this entire story doesn't fit the facts, the storyline appears to be setting in for much of the red electorate, to the point it is difficult for Haley to undo. In presidential campaigns, perceptions can set in quickly and become hard to shake. Indeed, though it is not impossible to believe that his confusing Haley and Pelosi was in fact intentional - an effort to confuse voters in suggesting that the very conservative Haley is actually a Democrat in Republican clothing. The odds are low that Haley's attacks will do much to significantly change Trump's narrative.

Haley's best bet is that by ramping up the intensity of her attacks, she can remain in the political game. Donors who dislike Trump will keep funding her. Voters in primary states who hate Trump and like her will give her enough of a vote to remain relevant. And then, the biggest question of all is whether an opening for Haley would develop if Trump gets convicted in one of the four criminal cases pending against him and, (as some polls suggest) suffers a loss of support.

CNN

UK cannot ignore crisis in DRC

Jeremy Corbyn

IN mid-December, I joined hundreds of thousands of people in central London calling for a ceasefire in Gaza. "We are united", I told the crowd, "in our demand for peace and justice for the Palestinian people." Looking out to a sea of Palestinian flags, I was buoyed by the determination of ordinary people to show solidarity with those living under systems of violence and occupation. And I was moved by their willingness to prove how these systems were global in scope and scale. "I want us all to be active as well," I concluded, "for peace and justice in the other wars that are fuelled by the arms trade - in Sudan, in Yemen, in West Papua, and in the Congo."

Against the global backdrop of deafening silence, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is currently experiencing a harrowing humanitarian crisis. Nearly seven million people have been internally displaced in the DRC and 26 million need humanitarian aid. One in three children are out of school. Tens of thousands of civilians experience physical, sexual and gender-based violence, used as a tool of control and degradation. Meanwhile, the DRC remains one of the UNHCR's most underfunded operations worldwide. Today's humanitarian crisis in the DRC did not emerge out of nowhere. It is an enduring legacy of colonial theft, violence and exploitation. During the Atlantic slave trade, more than five million Congolese people were captured, transported to the Americas and enslaved.

Descendants of those who evaded abduction and enslavement would endure the brutality of Belgian King

Leopold II. Amassing enormous riches from slave labour, Leopold was responsible for the deaths of more than 10 million Congolese men, women, and children. Independence in the 1960s was supposed to be a turning point; Patrice Lumumba was democratically elected on the promise of a free Congo. Threatening the interests of Western nations who sought to exploit his country, Lumumba was assassinated on January 17, 1961, with the support of the United States and Belgium.

For the Congolese people, colonial exploitation never ended. Today, the world relies on the DRC for natural resources, including diamonds, gold, timber, copper, oil, and gas. It produces 70 percent of the world's cobalt, an essential element in almost every lithium-ion rechargeable battery present in mobile phones and laptops many of us use every day. These resources are largely controlled by foreign companies, which profit from resources that should otherwise be owned by the Congolese people. There is a reason why the DRC ranks 179 out of 191 in the Human Development Index - and it is not because the country lacks sufficient resources. It is because these resources are extracted to satisfy foreign corporate greed.

Bloated private corporations do not lose little sleep over the resultant poverty, environmental degradation, or displacement, as communities are forced from their land to make way for mining operations. The continued exploitation of resources has also created a playground for various armed groups, which have used violence to maintain control over mines in the

DRC. For decades, civilians have paid a particularly heavy price, most notably in the eastern regions of Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu. Most recently, on June 11, 2023, an attack on the Lala refugee camp in Ituri province killed 46 people and displaced 7,800.

One of the most notable militia groups is the March 23 Movement (M23). Several human rights organisations, including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, as well as the United Nations, have reported that M23 has recruited child soldiers and committed unlawful killings, rape and other war crimes. The same human rights organisations have published evidence that M23 relies on financial and military support from DRC's neighbour, Rwanda. Congolese officials have repeatedly accused Rwanda of plundering their country's natural resources. In an interview for the Financial Times, DRC's finance minister, Nicolas Kazadi, said Kigali exported almost \$1bn in gold, tin, tantalum and tungsten in 2022, despite having few of these mineral deposits of its own. The UN has previously documented how minerals mined in the DRC are smuggled into Rwanda where they are tagged as locally produced.

While Belgium, France, and Germany have condemned Rwanda's support for M23, the United Kingdom government refuses to do so. How can they, when an honest recognition of these human rights abuses would expose the illegality of its flagship policy: to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda? Continuing to double down on this policy in the face of court rulings, the government

does not just show contempt for people risking their lives to reach a place of safety. It is actively putting them back at risk of persecution.

Our country has played an enormous role in generating the conditions for violence, discrimination and human rights abuses in the DRC, and indeed the Global South. Our government should recognise its responsibility to redress - not aggravate - this colonial trauma. That means, at the very least, fulfilling its international obligations towards the refugees, and their right to live in safety and peace. Indeed, we all have a responsibility to put pressure on our government to do so in the name of decolonisation. Many of the resources that we enjoy on a daily basis - including the technology you might be using to read this very article - rely on the DRC's exploitation. The least we can do is use this technology to effect change. That means writing to your local member of Parliament to ask them to demand that our government unequivocally condemns Rwanda for their support of M23, takes appropriate sanctions, and increases aid to the DRC. Many of those in positions of power and influence pretend as if the plight of people in the Global South simply does not matter. Whenever there is a crisis, if it is in Africa, then it may as well not have happened.

How much more violence, death and displacement should the people of the DRC endure before the international community wakes up and takes action? The people of the DRC - just like the people of Palestine, West Papua, Yemen, Sudan and beyond - deserve to live in peace, justice and freedom. Their voices cannot be ignored any longer.

Aljazeera

On the basis of mutual trust

Vladimir Norov

THE world has undergone many changes and shocks in recent years. Enhanced dialogue between scholars from China and overseas is needed to build mutual understanding on many problems the world faces. For this purpose, the China Watch Institute of China Daily and the National Institute for Global Strategy, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, jointly present this special column: The Global Strategy Dialogue, in which experts from China and abroad will offer insightful views, analysis and fresh perspectives on long-term strategic issues of global importance.

The modern system of international cooperation based on universal principles and norms is beginning to fail. One of the main reasons for this is a deep crisis of confidence and the lack of mutual trust at the global level, which, in turn, provokes geopolitical confrontation and regional conflicts, which destabilize trade and investment flows and exacerbate the challenges of ensuring food and energy security.

This fundamental process is accompanied by the trend toward multipolarity, the increasing interdependence of economies and the accelerating pace of digitalization. International threats and challenges are becoming more complex, disruptive and dangerous. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, established in 2001, is a classic example of an international organization that has successfully established itself as a model for maintaining and strengthening regional security, as well as a multilateral structure that can flexibly and effectively respond to changes at the regional and global levels. In fact, it is a unique interstate structure that has managed to unite countries with different cul-

tures and civilizational inheritances, their own foreign policy guidelines and models of national development. Regional security is an area in which a high level of mutual trust is required. The fact that a high level of mutual trust has developed over the course of more than two decades within the framework of the SCO's work is evidenced by its upholding of the "Shanghai Spirit" of mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for cultural diversity and the pursuit of common development.

In a short historical period, the SCO has come a long way, becoming an integral part of the modern global political and economic world order. Over the years of its existence, the SCO has gained considerable political weight and authority on the world stage. One of the main goals of the SCO is to support stability and security in the region. Since its establishment in Tashkent, in 2004, the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) has become the organization's main coordination center in the fight against terrorism, separatism and religious extremism. RATS conducts joint exercises and trainings, exchanges information and develops strategies to counter terrorist and extremist groups, as well as combating drug trafficking in the region. Ensuring information security and responding to challenges and threats on the internet was officially designated as a separate area of the work of RATS in 2023.

RATS actively cooperates with many international organizations such as the United Nations and Interpol, the International Drug Control Agency, the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Center for Internet Security, and

it develops partnerships with other countries and regions to jointly address security problems and threats in the region. The SCO members consider Central Asia to be the organization's core region and the SCO supports the efforts of the Central Asian countries to promote prosperity, peace, sustainable development, and uphold good-neighborliness, trust and friendship. Thanks to effective cooperation within the SCO, the situation in Central Asia is under control, despite some potential security risks. This is the SCO's biggest security achievement in the last 20 years.

The national interests and security of the SCO member states are directly linked to the situation in Afghanistan. That is why the Afghan issue has always been high on the organization's agenda. The SCO members are neighbors of Afghanistan, and therefore the SCO is an ideal platform for dialogue in order to resolve the Afghan issue. All the SCO members support the solution of the Afghan problem through political and diplomatic means and emphasize the need to form an inclusive government. The SCO-Afghanistan contact group can play an important role in this regard. The revival of the contact group can contribute to dialogue and significantly help the Afghan authorities in overcoming economic problems and building up their anti-terrorist potential.

Afghanistan, which for centuries has played the role of a buffer between global powers and regional centers of power, should pursue a new peace mission as a link between Central and South Asia.

The construction of the trans-Afghan corridor can become a symbol of such mutually beneficial interregional cooperation. It is also

important to understand that implementing common infrastructure projects such as the Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan Railway will not just solve socioeconomic, transport and communication problems, but also make significant contributions to regional security. Without the largest SCO countries, it is impossible to imagine global military and nuclear security, as well as the security of outer space and information space. It is important to note that the SCO countries have all the capabilities to ensure the security of global technological progress. It not only has raw materials, such as rare earth metals, that are critical for the Fourth Industrial Revolution, but also a rapidly developing educational and scientific-technical base.

At a time when access to innovation is becoming a focus of geopolitical competition and increasing technological inequality, the SCO can become one of the drivers of technological growth in the developing world. Today, the SCO is a thriving, developing structure that is gradually becoming a pole of attraction for a growing number of regional states, which will stimulate the process of its development, since each of them will bring with it new ideas and proposals, while embracing the "Shanghai Spirit".

The key to the SCO's international attractiveness is its non-aligned status, openness, equality and consensus-based decision-making, non-targeting of third countries or international organizations, respect for the sovereignty of all participants and non-interference in their internal affairs. It is obvious that all this creates a qualitatively new regional reality, while excluding bloc and confrontational approaches to solving international problems, and this will directly affect the entire system of continental and global security.

ONE of the more troubling aspects of the current political scene is the return to prominence of those responsible for the constitutional near-meltdown and the collapse of the Conservative Party to 9 per cent of the vote in summer 2019. One such is the former attorney general Dominic Grieve, who left the Tories that autumn, lost his parliamentary seat, and disappeared into obscurity. Yet here he is again, authoring a report published this week on the governance of Britain, together with a bunch of retired judges, lawyers, civil servants, and other such grand panjandrum of the British state.

Their report reveals much about the preoccupations of our permanent mandarin class and the great and the good. Grieve's foreword says "public confidence in our democratic processes is at a low point" (we can all agree with that) and that their proposed solutions would "make the exercise of power in the UK more structured, transparent, effective and responsible". But the solution does not follow from the diagnosis. What the report's authors seem to mean by it is people like them setting limits to, or even controlling, what ignoble politicians are able to do. They want the Civil Service code to be legally binding. Permanent secretaries' accountability to Parliament, not to their ministers, would be strengthened. Political appointments would be severely limited. Appointments to the Lords would be made not by the prime minister but by another independent body composed of...people like them. The Ministerial code would become law and an appointed commissioner

David Frost

would rule on it, with his or her own power to set rules on finances, conflicts, adviser appointments, and, bizarrely, ministerial training. An independent enforcement body would monitor the other bodies. And so on.

In short, actual politics, actual choices made by the electorate, would be replaced by serious responsible people operating serious institutions, totally insulated from populism or any other below-the-salt opinions: Plato's guardians (or should that be Guardian readers?) for the modern world.

I am sure Telegraph readers can see the two big problems with this. First, who says that the commissioners, the experts, the permanent secretaries, know any better than the politicians? Maybe they do, maybe they don't. But if you don't like the government or MPs, you can kick them out.

There's no kicking out the guardians, though, and when you try they are just replaced by others like them. They, however, can get rid of politicians: we have seen, the parliamentary standards processes now have the de facto power to suspend or even remove MPs, on flimsy grounds, because MPs now dare not challenge the Commission's rulings.

And, second, we've already been trying this and it isn't working. Of course we need effective and respected institutions. What we don't need is a further proliferation of quangos, expert groups, judicial reviews, human rights provisions, Ofcoms and the like. We already have quite enough of these things and they obscure the fact that process is not the same as substance. You can have perfectly operating institutions that are in

fact totally incapable of dealing with the country's actual problems - institutions in which the checks and balances, the coordination and scrutiny, have overwhelmed the capacity to make things happen. Just look at housing, at energy, at immigration - and much much more besides.

You might think that "surely these people cannot think that even more of the same is the right solution? Surely they must have learnt something?" Well they don't seem to have learnt from the catastrophic disintegration of the May government. The heart of the problem there was Parliament deciding to act independently on Brexit, as if it were itself the government.

Yet they propose to repeat exactly this - to give Parliament control over the government's business and to make it impossible to call an election ahead of time unless Parliament agrees. They seem to believe, as so many now do, that somehow a formal continental-style separation of powers has crept into UK governance under the cover of EU membership. If so, it needs expunging, not reinforcing.

The truth is that we have badly functioning institutions and we have an elected government that does not properly control the permanent government. The solution is not more of the same. Until we are honest about these realities, until we cut through the thicket of process in the interest of getting things done - as the Government is trying to do on Rwanda, albeit not determinedly enough - voters will continue to despair about the ability of elected politicians to solve their problems. That despair is the real problem the country faces and it needs fixing soon.

Pakistan, China enhance collaboration in pharmaceutical sector

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan and China have further enhanced collaboration in pharmaceutical sector, by launching Basagine Pen, a pre-filled insulin. The insulin was co-developed by Pakistan Getz Pharma and China Gan&Lee Pharmaceuticals. This marks a further development in the pharmaceutical collaboration between China and Pakistan, Gwadar Pro reported. The milestone lunching-event was attended by Khalid Mahmood, CEO and Managing Director of

Getz Pharma, and Du Kai, CEO of Gan&Lee Pharmaceuticals. "Getz Pharma has been a trusted overseas partner of our company for over a decade, with previous collaborations involving raw materials of second-generation and third-generation insulin. The launch of the Basagine Pen will further enhance our product portfolio in diabetes treatment, leveraging the strengths of both companies." Du Kai highlighted the long-standing partnership between the two companies. According to data

from the International Diabetes Federation (IDF), Pakistan has approximately 33 million diabetes patients aged 20 to 79, with an annual average expenditure of USD80.1 per patient. The prevalence of diabetes among adults aged 20 to 79 in Pakistan stands at 30.8%. Unfortunately, many diabetes patients in the country do not have access to timely and adequate medication. "The introduction of the Basagine Pen holds the promise of improving this situation by providing high-

er-quality and more accessible medication options for local patients," emphasized the representative from Getz Pharma. The collaboration between Gan&Lee Pharmaceuticals and Getz Pharma brings together China's advanced pharmaceutical technology and manufacturing capabilities with Pakistan's understanding of the local market and distribution networks. This synergy allows for the development and availability of innovative treatment options for diabetes patients in Pakistan.

China's road logistics price index up

BEIJING (Xinhua/APP): China's road logistics price index edged up 0.03 percent week on week from Jan. 29 to Feb. 2 as demand in the market remained generally stable amid slower supply expansion, industry data shows. The country's road logistics index came in at 1,038.95 points last week, according to a survey jointly conducted by the China Federation of Logistics and Purchasing and the Guangdong Lin'an Logistics Group. The sub-indices of all types of vehicles logged mild increase week on week. Specifically, the figure for the full-truckload logistics price, which primarily measures bulk commodity and cross-regional transportation, stood at 1,040.28 points in the period, up 0.03 percent on a weekly basis. The survey attributed the mild growth of the road logistics price last week to slower supply expansion in the sector amid general stable demand.

Boeing in 'last chance saloon', warns Emirates boss

DUBAI (Monitoring Desk): The boss of Emirates airline has warned Boeing is in the "last chance saloon", saying he had seen a "progressive decline" in its performance. Boeing has come under scrutiny after a panel on a 737 Max 9 passenger jet blew off mid-air last month. Emirates president Sir Tim Clark is a leading industry figure and the airline is a major Boeing customer. He also told the Financial Times that Emirates would send its engineers to monitor Boeing's production lines. In response to Sir Tim's remarks, Boeing pointed to comments its chief executive, Dave Calhoun, made last week, when he said: "We understand why [customers] are angry and we will work to earn their confidence." Emirates told the BBC it had nothing to add to what Sir Tim said in the interview. "They have got

to instil this safety culture which is second to none. They've got to get their manufacturing processes under review so there are no corners cut etc," Sir Tim said. "I'm sure Dave Calhoun and [commercial head] Stan Deal are on that... this is the last chance saloon," he added. Sir Tim was preparing to send Emirates engineers to monitor Boeing's production lines for the first time. He said the engineers would observe the production process of the 777 at Boeing and its supplier Spirit AeroSystems. Emirates is one of Boeing's biggest customers. In November, it placed an order for 95 wide-body Boeing 777 and 787 jets, used for long-haul flights, valued at \$52bn (£41.2bn) at list prices. But Boeing hit the headlines in recent weeks despite the Mr Calhoun insisting the company had

changed since he took over after former boss Dennis Muilenburg was fired. On 5 January a door plug on an Alaska Airlines 737 Max 9 blew off shortly after take-off, terrifying passengers, and forcing an emergency return to the Portland, Oregon airport. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) launched an investigation of Boeing's manufacturing process and barred the firm from expanding production of its popular 737 Max planes. Some of the company's biggest airline customers have also expressed concerns, noting that the issues may delay approval of new versions of the 737 Max plane, the Max 7 and Max 10, that are in the works. In 2018, a similar incident to what happened last month occurred to an older model of Boeing 737 being operated by Southwest Airlines.



LAHORE: Zafar Masud (President & CEO – BOP) and Qudsia Rahim (Executive Director, LBF) showing the MoU for partnership. Syed Mohsin Naqvi (Chief Minister Punjab) also present.

One million electric cars sold in the UK since 2002

LONDON (BBC): The UK registered its one millionth electric car last month, despite a big drop in sales, new figures suggest. New EV registrations by private buyers fell by a quarter in January, threatening to undermine the UK's net zero promises. Overall new car sales to private customers fell by 16% in the same period, the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) said. The figures have sparked more calls for tax cuts to boost uptake among buyers. More than 20,000 battery electric cars (BEVs) were registered in January, up by a fifth year on year and helped by generous tax incentives for company car users. It means that since 2002, one million of these

cars have reached the road. Fleet buyers - companies purchasing more than 25 units in one go - have been entirely behind the increase, with demand for BEVs growing by more than 40%. Electric cars accounted for 14.7% of all new vehicles sold in the UK in January. Although that was an increase over the same month the year before, it was still well below the market share of 16.5% achieved for the whole of 2023. The lack of sales to private buyers has prompted calls from the SMMT for the government to halve VAT on electric vehicles, in order to boost demand. "It's taken just over 20 years to reach our million EV milestone - but with the right policies, we can dou-

ble down on that success in just another two," SMMT boss Mike Hawes said. "Manufacturers have been asked to supply the vehicles, we now ask government to help consumers buy the vehicles on which net zero depends," he added. EVs have lower running costs than petrol and diesel vehicles, but the upfront price is around 30-40% higher, according to the motoring organisation. Currently those buying an EV in the UK through a business, a company car or salary sacrifice scheme can benefit from generous tax incentives. Grants for individuals were phased out by the government in 2022. Last year, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak confirmed a ban on new petrol and diesel car sales was

being pushed back five years from 2030 to 2035. The announcement was met with a mixed response from carmakers, many of whom have begun investing heavily in electric vehicle production. Despite the delay in the ban, firms will still be forced to meet strict quotas for selling electric cars from January, ensuring that more than one in five cars sold are zero emission models. If not, they will face heavy fines. The target will go up each year until 2030. According to the latest SMMT figures, the overall new car market grew in January, pushed by a large increase in fleet sales, which were up by a third. This was despite a fall in overall registrations of new private cars last month, which fell by 16%.

The Bank of Punjab partners with Lahore Biennale Foundation

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Bank of Punjab (BOP) demonstrates its steadfast commitment to promoting arts, literature, and crafts in the country as a strong corporate advocate. With a long-standing dedication to various initiatives and programs, including literary festivals, the bank actively contributes to the promotion of literacy, arts, culture, and heritage preservation. In a significant move towards nurturing arts and culture, BOP has joined hands with the Lahore Biennale Foundation (LBF). The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) formalizing this partnership was signed at the Curtain Raiser Ceremony for the eagerly awaited third edition of Lahore Biennale, LB03, held at Alhambra Arts Council, Lahore. The distinguished event witnessed the presence of key figures such as Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi (Chief Minister Punjab), Danyal Saleem Gilani (Secretary

Information and Culture, Punjab), Zafar Masud (President & CEO – BOP), Tariq Mahmood (Executive Director, Alhambra), Naazish Ata-Ullah (Chairperson, LBF), Raza Ali Dada (Chairperson, LBF), Qudsia Rahim (Executive Director, LBF), Kamran Lashari (Director General, PWCHAA), and various other dignitaries. Following the ribbon-cutting ceremony, marking the commencement of LB03, Curator John Tain led a guided tour for patrons and guests, showcasing the diverse talents contributing to the exhibition. Renowned artists such as Haegue Yang, Lo Lai-Lai Natalie, Hamra Abbas, Ali Kazim, Usman Saeed, Carolina Caycedo, Abuzar Madhu, Mehreen Murtaza, Imran Channa, along with retrospective works by artists Zahoor ul Akhlaq, Mian Salahuddin, and Sheherazade Alam, were featured in the preview exhibition. During the gathering, Zafar Masud (President & CEO - The Bank of Punjab)

underscored the importance of corporate collaboration in promoting the arts. The subsequent signing of the MOU between LBF and BOP solidified an institutional partnership for the next 3 editions of the Biennale. This marks a significant milestone in the collaborative efforts to enhance and celebrate the vibrant arts and cultural landscape of Pakistan. Adding to the occasion's significance, Qudsia Rahim (Executive Director, LBF) shared her thoughts, stating that the Lahore Biennale Foundation adopts an inclusive and context-driven approach to achieve its projects and goals, challenging traditional critique methods and prevalent frameworks for curating, researching, and archiving material culture, built ecologies, and histories. We express the deepest gratitude to the Bank of Punjab for their generous support in conducting this biennale. Chief Minister Mr. Mohsin Naqvi delivered the closing remarks and

extended his heartfelt salute to the organizers of Biennale and the visionary individuals behind the seamless execution of such remarkable international events. Organizing such endeavors is no small feat, and we take immense pride in acknowledging their dedication and hard work. As we sit in our homes, it's easy to question the future of our country, but I firmly believe that arts, culture, and sports serve as powerful catalysts, uniting nations and the world. By emphasizing these three pillars, significant progress in our country becomes not only possible but inevitable. This development underscores the collaborative spirit and innovative approach that both BOP and LBF bring to the cultural landscape, emphasizing the importance of diverse perspectives in shaping the arts and cultural discourse in Pakistan. The Lahore Biennale's 2024 edition is scheduled for inauguration on October 5, 2024.

Gold rates decline by Rs.1,200 to Rs.214,800 per tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs.1,200 and was sold at Rs.214,800 on Monday compared to its sale at Rs. 216,000 on last trading day. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs.1,029 to Rs.184,156 from Rs.185,185 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went down to Rs.168,810 from Rs. 169,753, 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 decreased by \$11 to \$2,048 from \$2,059, the Association reported.

Russian oil getting into UK via refinery loophole, reports claim

LONDON (BBC): Millions of barrels of fuel made from Russian oil are still being imported to the UK despite sanctions imposed over the war in Ukraine, research claims. A so-called "loophole" means Russian crude is refined in countries such as India and the products sold to the UK. This is not illegal and does not breach the UK's Russian oil ban, but critics say it undermines sanctions aimed at restricting Russia's war funds. The UK government denied there had been any imports of Russian oil since 2022. But a spokesman said internationally recognised "rules of origin" define that crude, once refined in another country, is classed

for the purposes of trade as originating from the refining country. The UK is among many Western countries to ban the import of all oil and oil products that originate in Russia in a bid to hit the amount of cash Moscow can generate from fossil fuels. But two separate reports, shared exclusively with the BBC, suggest the rules on refining enable products made from Russian crude oil to arrive on UK soil. The Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) said this "refining loophole" meant countries such as India and China, who have not sanctioned the Kremlin, are able to legally import Russian crude and refine it into oil prod-

ucts such as jet fuel and diesel. They then export those products to the likes of the UK and the EU. "The issue with this loophole is that it increases the demand for Russian crude and enables higher sales in terms of volume and pushing up their price as well, which increases the funds sent to the Kremlin's war chest," said Isaac Levi, head of CREA's Europe-Russia policy and energy analysis. In a separate research paper, campaign group Global Witness estimated that throughout 2023, some 5.2 million barrels of refined petroleum products that had been produced from Russian crude oil were imported to the UK.

Asia markets mixed as blockbuster US jobs batter rate cut hopes

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Asian markets were mixed Monday after a forecast-busting US jobs report and comments by Federal Reserve boss Jerome Powell shattered any remaining hopes for a March interest rate cut. Decision-makers left traders disappointed last week when they said after a meeting that they were unlikely to loosen policy at their next gathering. There were still some rumblings of a change in view if the non-farm payrolls data came in below expectations, but they were soon extinguished Friday by the highest reading in a year, while December's figure was ramped up. The figures showed the labour market and world's biggest economy remained robust despite borrowing costs sitting at two-decade highs, giving little room to the Fed to cut even as inflation comes down. That was followed by the airing Sunday of an interview with Powell in which he said the bank wanted to see more data. The "danger of moving too soon is that the job's not quite done, and that the really good readings we've had for the last six months

somehow turn out not to be a true indicator of where inflation's heading", he said according to a transcript from CBS. "The prudent thing to do is to... just give it some time and see that the data continue to confirm that inflation is moving down to two percent in a sustainable way," he said in the interview, which was conducted before the jobs report was released. The chances of a March reduction plunged to 20 percent after the reading, down from around 40 percent Thursday, according to Bloomberg News. They had been about 80 percent at the start of the year. "Initially, markets were anticipating six cuts starting in March," said Stephen Innes at SPI Asset Management. "However, Powell's recent remarks suggest such an early move was improbable. Combined with a robust January jobs report, hopes of an early spring adjustment have moved from improbable to impossible." And Yardeni Research President Ed Yardeni added that officials would likely continue to push back against market speculation for five cuts before the end of the year. Still, Wall Street ended

Friday with more big gains for all three main indexes, pushing the S&P 500 to a fresh record thanks to a rally in tech giants Meta and Amazon in the wake of strong earnings. The advance in New York was fuelled by optimism that the economy is not likely to fall into recession, while rates are also still expected to come down. Most of Asia struggled again, however, with Hong Kong and Shanghai extending a sell-off fuelled by growing concerns about the Chinese economy. Investors were unmoved by pledges from officials Sunday to prevent wild fluctuations in stocks, with the China Securities Regulatory Commission vowing to guide more medium- and long-term funds into the market. They provided few concrete plans, and observers said the move was unlikely to help turn sentiment around. "The statement sought to stabilise investor sentiment, but didn't touch on fundamental problems including a lack of confidence and huge economic uncertainty," Shen Meng, at investment bank Chanson & Co, said. "Those issues are the

causes of abnormal market fluctuation." Observers, however, said the market may be about to bounce back after a long-running sell-off. "Whether or not today marks the floor to Chinese equities is yet to be seen but it sure feels as though we're bumping along the bottom as policymakers have signalled they no longer want to see any further declines," said Invesco Asset Management's David Chao. There were also losses in Sydney, Seoul, Singapore, Jakarta and Wellington. Tokyo rose as the dollar rallied against the yen to boost exporters. The greenback surged Friday in reaction to the jobs data, which ramped up Treasury yields on the prospect of interest rates staying higher for longer. Mumbai, Manila and Bangkok edged up. Tokyo - Nikkei 225: UP 0.5 percent at 36,354.16 (close) Hong Kong - Hang Seng Index: DOWN 0.1 percent at 15,515.67 Shanghai - Composite: DOWN 1.0 percent at 2,702.18 (close) Dollar/yen: UP at 148.32 yen from 148.30 yen on Friday

Snap to lay off 'approximately' 10% of its staff

NEW YORK (BBC): Social media giant Snap, which operates Snapchat, has announced plans to cut "approximately" 10% of its staff. The firm said in November 2023 it had 5,000 employees, suggesting around 500 people are facing redundancy. It comes a day before Snap reports its fourth-quarter results - having reported a net loss of \$368m (£294m) in the previous quarter in October 2023. Snapchat said the move would "reduce hierarchy and promote in-person collaboration". "We are focused on supporting our departing team members and we are very grateful for their hard work and many contributions to Snap," a spokesperson told the BBC. According to its most recent annual report, more than 500 people work for

the firm in the UK. It is unclear if any of the cuts will fall in the UK. Jasmine Enberg, principle social media analyst at Insider Intelligence, told the BBC the layoffs "don't bode well for the state of Snap's business" ahead of its latest earnings announcement on Tuesday. She pointed to rival Meta's latest results - which showed quarterly profits tripling year-on-year, a surge in users, lower costs and higher ad sales - as "a tough act for Snap to follow". "Snap is likely trying to garner some goodwill with investors, who rewarded its competitor for its cost-cutting measures and its continued 'do more with less' mantra going into 2024," Ms Enberg said. She added that Snap's advertising revenues have been "slow to recover from the digital ad slowdown".

It is the second wave of mass redundancies from the social media company, which laid off about 20% of its workers in August 2022. Snap has attempted to expand into products beyond Snapchat, including experimenting with augmented reality (AR) glasses, dubbed Spectacles. But the firm has been unable to find a mass market for its other products, and it subsequently closed a division that offered AR services to business customers in 2023. The latest job cuts come as companies, including Meta and Google, have been grappling with how to balance cost-cutting measures with the need to remain competitive. According to layoffs.fyi, which tracks job losses in the tech sector, there were more than 232,000 job cuts in the industry in 2023.

Elsewhere, last week the firm's chief executive Evan Spiegel was grilled alongside the bosses of X (formerly Twitter), Meta, Discord and TikTok at a US Senate hearing about child safety online, where senators' attention mostly fell on Meta chief executive Mark Zuckerberg and TikTok boss Shou Zi Chew. Mr Spiegel said in his opening testimony at the hearing that he and co-founder Bobby Murphy built Snapchat as an alternative to other social media platforms, where images shared were "permanent, public, and subject to popularity metrics". The redundancies were announced by the firm in a filing with the US Securities and Exchange Commission. Snap said that the layoffs would affect staff globally, but did not specify who would be affected further.



In brief

ICC releases ITT for media rights

DUBAI (PPI) The International Cricket Council will today release its Invitation To Tender (ITT) for media rights in three territories, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka for 2024 to 2025. According to a statement on Monday, following the successful conclusion of media rights agreements in several markets including India, the United Kingdom and Ireland, the USA and Canada, Sub-Saharan Africa region, Australia and Middle East and North Africa the ICC is now starting the process in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. In Pakistan there are two packages available combining both TV and digital rights including both men's and women's rights, with one TV and digital combined package available in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka respectively. The packages will be for three women's events and three men's events up until the end of next year. ICC Chief Executive Geoff Allardice said: "We are delighted to be releasing the ITT for media rights in three of cricket's major broadcast markets in South Asia, namely Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, as we continue to build our team of broadcast partners who will take ICC events to more fans across the world." The ITT will be released today, and interested parties need to email iccmmediarights2024-2031@icc-cricket.com to access the tender documents. Subsequent ITTs for additional markets will be released in due course.

Goggia breaks leg in training

ROME (AFP): Italy's 2018 Olympic downhill champion Sofia Goggia suffered a broken leg in training, the Italian Winter Sports Federation (FISI) announced on Monday. FISI released a statement saying that scans on Monday revealed Goggia had a double fracture of her right tibia. She was due to undergo surgery later in the day in Milan. FISI had earlier said the skier "straddled a gate with her right leg in a right-hand turn" in training. "Turbo Goggia" also won the downhill Olympic silver in 2022 and is the reigning World Cup champion and leader in the discipline this season. She has 24 World Cup victories, six in super-G the rest in downhill, the most recent in Altenmarkt-Zauchensee, in Austria. This season has brought a string of serious injuries to top skiers. The women's circuit has already lost two reigning Olympic gold medalists -- Slovakia's slalom titleholder Petra Vlhova and Switzerland's downhill champion Corinne Suter both suffered season-ending knee injuries. On the men's side, French former overall World Cup champion Alexis Pinturault and Austrian slalom specialist Marco Schwarz were sidelined due to knee injuries. Norway's 2020 overall World Cup winner, Norwegian Aleksander Aamodt Kilde sustained a deep cut to his shin in a crash.

Inter beat Juve

MILAN (AFP/APP): Inter Milan took firm control of the Serie A title race by winning Sunday's highly-anticipated clash with Juventus 1-0 and moving four points clear of their closest rivals for the Scudetto. Simone Inzaghi's side prevailed in a tense but eventful clash at the San Siro thanks to Federico Gatti's own goal eight minutes before half-time.

Sri Lanka celebrate 10-wicket Test win against Afghanistan



COLOMBO (AFP): Sri Lanka won their one-off Test match against Afghanistan by 10 wickets with a day to spare, with their opening batsmen chasing down an easy target of 56 in Colombo Monday.

Afghanistan were bowled out for 296 in their second innings, setting Sri Lanka the low goal, with Dimuth Karunaratne (32 not out) and Nishan Madushka (22 not out) finishing the job within 7.2 overs.

Afghanistan were playing catch-up after conceding a lead of 241 runs in the first innings, but fought back well in their second dig with Ibrahim Zadrar leading the way with a maiden Test hundred. Rahmat Shah backed up the opening batter with a half-century but once the pair were dismissed, Afghanistan folded quickly. Sri Lanka skipper Dhananjaya de Silva said Afghanistan did well on day two with the ball but

his team stuck to their plan. "When both Angelo (Mathews) and I got dismissed, it might not seem that bad but that was the point that Afghanistan felt they were back in the game," he said. "I think that was the crucial moment of the match. But our bowlers stuck to the plan all day (day 3), not giving runs away and keeping it tight." Prabath Jayasuriya finished with his seventh five-wicket haul in Test cricket.

"I'm really happy at the moment, the last couple of days were tough," said Jayasuriya, named man of the match. "We knew this was a batting-friendly wicket, so we were just trying to do the basics right." Afghanistan were looking good to stretch the game to the final day when they resumed on day four at 199 for one in their second innings.

'Lack of experience' However, six wickets fell in the morning session for

just 52 runs as the second new ball hurt the Afghans. Seamer Kasun Rajitha dismissed overnight batsman Rahmat for 54 and then left-arm spinner Jayasuriya ran through the middle order as the new ball offered him bounce and turn. Jayasuriya used his arm ball -- which goes straight on -- to good effect, foxing batsmen who were playing for turn.

Zadrar, who had batted for more than six hours for his hundred, was confused by one such delivery, and was bowled through the gate. Jayasuriya finished with five for 107, while seamers Asitha Fernando and Kasun Rajitha shared five wickets between them.

Jayasuriya ended the game with eight wickets, having taken three in the first innings. Despite the loss, Afghanistan's fast bowlers were impressive, with Naveed Zadrar picking up four wickets in Sri Lanka's first innings on his

debut. Hundreds by former captains Mathews and Dinesh Chandimal helped Sri Lanka to their first-innings total of 439.

The pair were involved in a record 232-run stand for the fourth wicket, the highest-scoring partnership at Colombo's Sinhalese Sports Club for that wicket. Afghanistan captain Hashmatullah Shahidi said he was disappointed because they lost the game despite managing a "good comeback".

"I think it's the lack of experience in Test cricket and also not having a lot of opportunities to play red-ball cricket," Shahidi said. "We're new in Test cricket and it's a learning process for us. I hope that we learn from this game." The match was not part of the World Test Championship. The teams will now move to Kandy for a three-match ODI series, followed by three T20 Internationals in Dambulla.

Peshawar Zalmi unveiling HBLPSL 9 training kit



F.P. Report

LAHORE: Peshawar Zalmi, renowned for its extraordinary and creative endeavors, has once again captured the spotlight with the unveiling of their HBLPSL 9 training kit, employing groundbreaking CGI technology. This move not only sets a historic precedent in Pakistani sports but also reinforces Peshawar Zalmi's reputation as a pioneering force within the PSL.

Last season's kit reveal featured none other than world No. 1 ODI batter and team captain, Babar Azam. The collaboration with athleisure wear partner, GYM Armour, and the participation of Red Bull Records, earned widespread acclaim for its fashionable and trendy appeal. Anticipation for the Peshawar Zalmi kit reveal is palpable each year, as fans eagerly await the coolest kits presented in the most creative ways.

This year, the team has taken innovation to new heights by utilizing CGI technology to unveil their training kit. This marks a first-of-its-kind initiative in Pakistani sports, underscoring Peshawar Zalmi's commitment to pushing the boundaries of creativity and technology in sports branding.

The visually stunning CGI sequence revealed Arbab Niaz Cricket Stadium, potentially becoming the home ground for Peshawar Zalmi in the event of PSL expansion to Peshawar. The sequence depicted the stadium's pitch opening up, symbolizing the emergence of the team's dynamic and stylish training kit for the upcoming season.

As fans eagerly await HBLPSL 9, Peshawar Zalmi has once again demonstrated its commitment to creating memorable moments for supporters, leaving an indelible mark on the league's promotional landscape.

Peshawar Zalmi, beyond being a cricket team, is a symbol of innovation, creativity, and a commitment to excellence. The team consistently sets new standards for sports entertainment in Pakistan.

FIFA unveils schedule for World Cup 2026

NEW YORK (Agencies): The Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) announced the schedule of the 2026 Men's Football World Cup during a live broadcast at the Telemundo Center in Miami on Sunday.

The 2026 World Cup final will be held at MetLife Stadium in New York/New Jersey, organisers FIFA announced on Sunday. The New York bid held off a strong challenge from Dallas to secure the July 19 game, the culmination of the expanded 48-team tournament being co-hosted by the USA, Canada and Mexico.

The competition will kick off with the opening game at Mexico City's iconic Azteca Stadium on June 11.

"The most inclusive and impactful FIFA World Cup ever is no longer a dream but a reality that will take shape in the form of 104 matches in 16 state-of-the-art stadiums across Canada, Mexico and the USA," said FIFA president Gianni Infantino.

"From the opening match at the iconic Estadio Azteca to the spectacular final in New York New Jersey, players and fans have been at the core of our extensive planning for this game-changing tournament... that will not only set new records but also leave an indelible legacy."

Atlanta and Dallas will host the semi-finals while the third-place game will be played in Miami.

The quarter-final games will take place in Los Angeles, Kansas City, Miami and Boston. A total of 16 cities across the three countries will host games with the bulk of the matches being held in the USA.

The 1994 World Cup was also held in the United States and the final took place at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, near Los Angeles. New York hosted games at that tournament at the old Giants Stadium, which was later demolished to make way for MetLife, which opened in 2010.

The decisions were announced on a live television broadcast in North America that featured Infantino alongside comedian and actor Kevin Hart, rapper Drake and celebrity Kim Kardashian. The 82,500-seat MetLife Stadium, across the Hudson River from New York in East Rutherford, New Jersey, is the home of the NFL's New York Giants and New York Jets but has held a number of international football games, including the final of the 2016 Copa America tournament.

The New York bid had lobbied hard on the city's experience at hosting major international events and it's position as a global city with easy transportation connections for fans. Dallas had hoped that AT&T Stadium, in Arlington, Texas, home to the NFL's Dallas Cowboys, would benefit from having a roof to protect the game from the elements.

There is some compensation for Dallas with the venue being given nine total games — the most of any venue.

Los Angeles had also thrown a hat into the ring but the attempt struggled amid disagreements with FIFA about tournament upgrades needed to NFL venue SoFi Stadium. The Azteca will become the first stadium to host World Cup tournament games in three separate editions after 1970 and 1986.

The venue hosted the finals of the 1970 and 1986 tournaments. The World Cup will take place during celebrations of the 250th anniversary of American independence.

A round-of-16 game will be held on July 4, Independence Day, in Philadelphia, where the US Declaration of Independence was signed.

The United States will kick off group stage competition at SoFi Stadium in Los Angeles on June 12 and will also play in Seattle. Toronto was selected to host the first game for the Canadian team. Vancouver is the other Canadian venue which will host the squad.

The expansion of the tournament to 48 teams from 32 means there will be an additional 24 matches, making up a total of 104 games across the 16 venues.

The tournament will take the format of 12 groups of four teams with the top two going through along with the eight best third-placed teams.

From there, the competition is a straight knock-out format with the finalists having to play eight games rather than the previous seven. FIFA says the match schedule, which will not be complete until the qualification process has ended, has been designed to limit travel for the teams.

The full draw for the tournament is expected to be held in late 2025. Group fixtures have been designed to avoid cross-coast travel for the teams, who will also be able to choose from team bases in their group's region.

The 16 host cities for the FIFA World Cup are: Atlanta, Boston, Dallas, Guadalajara, Houston, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Mexico City, Miami, Monterrey, New York-New Jersey, Philadelphia, San Francisco Bay Area, Seattle, Toronto and Vancouver.

Kashmir Day Cycle Race organized



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cycling Association successfully organized the Kashmir Day Cycle Race, showcasing exceptional athleticism and sportsmanship over a 48-kilometer route from Mardan to Peshawar.

Cyclists displayed remarkable skill and determination, claiming all three top positions in the race. Sanaullah emerged as the triumphant leader, completing the course in an impressive 1 hour, 13 minutes, and 25 seconds. Khizar Hayat secured the second position with a time of 1 hour, 13 minutes, and 50 seconds, closely followed by

Haroon Khan, who secured the third position with a time of 1 hour, 18 minutes, and 30 seconds.

The race drew participants from diverse divisions, including Peshawar, Mardan, Swat, and Kohat, showcasing the unity and competitive spirit within the cycling community.

Notable personalities graced the event, including international cricketer Fakhar Zaman and DSO Mardan Saeed Akhtar, who joined Chairman of the KP Cycling Association Nasir Ahmad, President Syed Shayan Ali Shah, Secretary Muhammad Ali, and other officials as special guests. The collaboration

between the District Sports Office Mardan and PEMS Schools System played a pivotal role in the successful organization of the race, highlighting the importance of community partnerships in promoting sports and healthy competition.

The closing ceremony, held at PIMS Schools Peshawar, was a grand affair featuring special guests Ismail Khan and Anwar Khan, who enthusiastically distributed trophies, medals, cash prizes, and certificates to the deserving participants. The event concluded on a high note, leaving a lasting impression of camaraderie and achievement within the cycling community.

Use of drugs by athletes harmful for their health: Shahid Islam

PESHAWAR (APP): Deputy Director General (Technical) Shahid Islam Monday said that the use of drugs by athletes to enhance their overall performance through drugs are harmful to general health and for this purpose, the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) is playing a key role in restricting the athletes.

WADA's primary role is to develop, harmonize and coordinate anti-doping rules and policies across all sports and countries, Shahid Islam said in his lecture as course conductor in the five-day PSB Coaching and Training Course which concluded here.

A total of 85 male and female athletes including coaches, trainers and instructors attended the course wherein Rana Nasrullah, Dr. Nabeel and international football coach Asad Ullah supervised the course with their valuable lectures.

The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), he said, was established on November 10, 1999. Its mission is to promote and coordinate the fight against doping in sports internationally. Thanks to this independent agency, the Olympic Movement and public authorities worldwide can intensify their efforts to banish drugs from sports, he added.

Shahid Islam said that on the special instruction of the Director General PSB, they have started their season coaching and training courses from Peshawar, followed by organizing in other cities as well in order

to train and coach upcoming coaches, trainers and instructors so that to improve the overall standard of sports in Pakistan.

PSB Refreshes Course also included a vital topic on Anti-Doping Awareness conducted by Shahid Islam. Anti-Doping Awareness also underlined the need to enhance speed and endorsement through biomechanics of the human body.

Shahid Islam said that soon after joining as DG Shoaib Khoso, he has directed all the centers across Pakistan to host different courses related to Athletes and Games to ensure the provision of first-hand and much-updated information to youngsters who are part of various Games.

Shahid Islam said that tackling doping issues with an iron hand to save the country's reputation awareness is a key for the athletes. Sports at the elite level are about maximizing performance and gaining every advantage possible within reason. To dope and use banned, performance-enhancing drugs are to knowingly gain an outlawed advantage over competitors, Shahid Islam said. He said the lack of awareness of the athletes also led to such use of banned drugs.

He said drugs and anti-doping in Sports should be thoroughly checked with the aim of protecting the overall image of the athlete and the country. About the definitions of doping, Shahid Islam said that doping is defined as the presence of prohibited

substances or methods to unfairly improve sporting performance and to gain an advantage over competitors.

Shahid said that athletes take performance-enhancing drugs to recover from injury more quickly, to mask pain, and influenced by others, the will to win overrides the moral conscience, a desire to be the best at all costs, especially when achieving financial rewards, better results lead to better sponsors and endorsement contracts, desire to meet expectations of others, making the most of a short sporting life, willingness to cheat for public acclaim and feeling that their natural ability is not good enough.

He said doping is now a global problem that follows international sporting events worldwide. International sports federations, led by the International Olympic Committee, have for the past half-century attempted to stop the spread of this problem, with little effect.

Nasrullah Rana in his two-hour long lecture on the need to develop speed, stamina and the role of good coaches and knowledgeable coaches. He said the recognition, trust, respect or awareness of the coaches among athletes is only based on knowledge.

He said, sports coaches assist athletes in developing to their full potential. They are responsible for training athletes in a sport by analyzing their performances, instructing in relevant skills and by providing encouragement.



Jasprit Bumrah celebrates after taking the final wicket.



In brief

RWMC organizes Kashmir Day rally

RAWALPINDI (APP): Waste Management Company (RWMC) on Monday observed 'Kashmir Day' to express solidarity with the oppressed Kashmiri people. The RWMC took out a rally from Liaquat Bagh workshop to Benazir Bhutto road to denounce the Indian unilateral illegal actions against the Kashmiri people as well as the atrocities being carried out by the Indian forces in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). The participants of the rally wore black bands and carried the flags of Pakistan and Azad Kashmir. The speakers on the occasion saluted to commitment and will of the people in the occupied Kashmir without bowing to the brutal use of force by the Indian troops. Meanwhile, the RWMC workers cleaned all the rallies, processions routes, and their vicinity held in connection with Kashmir Day. The construction material or debris was also removed from the routes of the procession and its adjacent areas.

PIA flights grounded

ISLAMABAD (INP): In some bad news for patients, including residents, of Gilgit and adjoining areas, travellers between Gilgit and Islamabad are in for some disruptions as Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) suspends flights to the northern city from February 3 to 7. This temporary grounding is due to a technical malfunction in the ATR aircraft that typically serves this route. The PIA plane on the air route between Gilgit and Islamabad has been handed over for repair work. The PIA flights to Gilgit will remain suspended until February 7 due to the malfunctioning ATR aircraft. PIA operates one to two daily flights between the two cities using ATR aircraft that malfunctioned on February 3, known for their ability to handle short runways and mountainous terrain. Unfortunately, one of these planes has encountered a mechanical issue, necessitating immediate repairs. With only two ATR aircraft available for small-sector flights across the country, including Gilgit, PIA is unable to offer alternative services during the repair period. One of the two aircraft is engaged in flights in the north zone of Islamabad and in the south zone of Karachi. The spokesperson confirmed that the affected aircraft will be back in service on February 8, resuming regular operations to Gilgit.

Ghulam Ali Chagla remembered

ISLAMABAD (INP): Composer of National Anthem Ahmed Ghulam Ali Chagla was remembered on his death anniversary on Monday. Born on May 31, 1902 in Karachi, Ghulam Ali Chagla studied from Sindh Madrasatul Islam Karachi. He was student of Maharaj Swami Das, who was renowned musician of Karachi. Chagla also studied musicology at Trinity College of Music England. Before creation of Pakistan, he worked as a musician in Ajanta, a film company in Bombay. After creation, the government of Pakistan appointed him as a member of the committee for preparing music of the national anthem. It was his luck that he got the honor of composing this tune. On August 21, 1949, the government approved the tune prepared by him as the national anthem of Pakistan. Ahmad Ali Ghulam Ali Chagla passed away on February 05, 1953.



ISLAMABAD: Mushaal Hussein Mullick, SAPM Human Rights and Women Empowerment visiting after inaugurate an Exhibition on Kashmir at National College of Arts.

Sustainable Kashmir solution possible through UN resolutions' implementation: Gohar Ijaz

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Interior and Commerce Dr Gohar Ijaz on Monday said that a sustainable solution to the Kashmir issue was possible only by implementing the United Nations resolutions and providing the Kashmiris their right to an impartial and independent referendum.

The minister, in his message in connection with Kashmir Solidarity Day, said the brave people of Kashmir had been struggling for their right to self-

determination for the last 76 years.

He said on the Kashmir Solidarity Day, which was celebrated like every year in support of the Kashmiris' continuous struggle, the entire Pakistani nation stood with their Kashmiri brothers and sisters and pay homage to their sacrifices for freedom.

Dr Ijaz Gohar said as per the UN Security Council's resolutions, Pakistan would continue its unwavering support to the Kashmiri people until they achieve

their right to self-determination. He said that after the illegal and unilateral actions of August 5, 2019, Indian brutalities in the occupied Valley had increased and the Indian Supreme Court's decision of December 11, 2023 was a step forward to depriving the Kashmiris of their right to self-determination. The international community should to play an active role in stopping worst human rights abuses in the occupied Jammu and Kashmir, the minister added.

Speakers deliberate on promoting values, principles of human fraternity

ISLAMABAD (APP): Speakers in a seminar have discussed efforts to promote the values and principles of human fraternity, aiming to achieve peaceful coexistence, acceptance of others, and diversity through dialogue and mutual understanding.

The seminar was arranged by the Pakistan branch of the Muslim Council of Elders titled "Human Fraternity: Messages of Hope and Peace in the World".

The International Day of Human Fraternity was observed annually in recognition of the signing of the document on Human Fraternity between Dr. Ahmed Al-Tayeb, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar and Chairman of the Muslim Council of Elders alongside Pope Francis, Pontiff of the Catholic Church, in Abu Dhabi in 2019.

The seminar witnessed diverse partici-

pation from prominent figures in Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan. Among them were Dr. Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, the Director-General of the Islamic Research Institute and Shariah Professor at the International Islamic University; Dr. Sardar Tahir Tabassum, the founder and president of the Institute of Peace and Development, and Chairman of the Global Harmony Council; Reverend Samuel Robert Azaria, the Director of the Christian Studies Center in Rawalpindi; Sardar Ranjeet Singh, a former member of the local parliament; Dr. Sanaullah Al-Azhari, an associate professor at the Maritime University's College of Islamic Studies; and Allama Liaquat Ali, the director of the Jafari Jurisprudence School in Attock.

PAC organized rally and photographic exhibition to mark Kashmir day

RAWALPINDI (APP): Punjab Arts Council (PAC) on Monday organized a rally and photographic exhibition on the occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day.

The rally was led by Director of Arts Council Waqar Ahmed while Deputy Director Muhammad Shakur and Assistant Director Muhammad Suleman also accompanied him.

Addressing the rally, Director of PAC Waqar Ahmed said that the purpose of celebrating the day was to express support for the struggle of the Kashmiri's to achieve their right of self-determination under the UN resolutions.

"We strongly condemn

the human rights violations and atrocities committed by India in illegally occupied Kashmir and salute the struggle and determination of the Kashmiri people of their right to self-determination", he said and added that even after the passage of 76 years, the series of cruel and inhuman acts against the oppressed Kashmiris of the India continues. Waqar said that millions of innocent Kashmiris were martyred by Indian brutality and despite the military massacre, India has not been able to lower the strong ambitions and morale of the Kashmiris till date.

Muhammad Shakoor said that since 1990s, India had martyred around 96,285 Kashmiris for demanding freedom during the last 33 years.

Around 170,000 Kashmiri citizens were imprisoned in various jails in India, while properties worth billions of rupees were seized and more than 100,000 business centers and houses were burnt added.

He said that on August 5, 2019 India violated the UN resolutions and terminated the special status of Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. A large number of showbiz artists from the twin cities participated in the rally.

PTA committed to ensuring safe online environment for country's youth: Chairman

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Chairman, Major General (R) Hafeez ur Rehman, has said that the PTA is committed to ensuring a safe online environment, particularly for the country's youth and children. In a message on the occasion of "Safer Internet Day", to be celebrated on February 6, he said, "PTA recognizes the critical role that the internet plays in our lives. We are steadfast in our commitment to ensuring a safe online environment, particularly for our youth and children."

The chairman asserted that it is the collective responsibility of all to create a secure and protective digital space, allowing Pakistani users to continue their online

activities in a safer environment.

He further mentioned that PTA has collaborated with Meta, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), TikTok, and other organizations to pursue the cause of promoting a safer online environment in Pakistan. "Our efforts for the cause have been recognized, and PTA received the SAMENA Council international LEAD award under the category of "Enabling Child & Youth Safety Online," the chairman said.

He said that online safety is a global issue, and only through collaboration and coordinated efforts can the government create a digital world that prioritizes the safety of every individual.

Iranian envoy expresses support to Kashmiris' just struggle

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan Reza Amiri Moghadam, on the occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day on Monday, supported the people of Kashmir in their struggle for right to self-determination.

In a post on social media platform X, he extended his solidarity with the Muslim people of Kashmir, according to a Radio Pakistan's report.

People across Rwp division observe Kashmir Solidarity Day

RAWALPINDI (APP): People across Rawalpindi division on Monday observed Kashmir Solidarity Day to express their wholehearted support for the struggle of their Kashmiri brothers and sisters for their struggle against human rights violations in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

The educational institutes organized debate and declamation contests and essay writing competitions in connection with the day. The United Nations (UN) should play its key role in the freedom of the people of Kashmir, said Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Education Rawalpindi, Yasin Baloch.

While addressing the participants as chief guest at an event organized at Government Viqar un Nisa Graduate College here he said that Quid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah had said that Kashmir is the jugular vein of Pakistan.

Solidarity with the Kashmiri brothers and sisters was shown by observing a minute's silence by all.

Following the national anthem, the students expressed their emotions in songs, speeches and other colourful performances. A special documentary about Indian oppression and the sacrifices being given by the Kashmiri people for freedom was also shown. The world community and human rights watchdogs should also take effective notice of the human rights violations being committed by Indian forces in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, the CEO said adding that the people of Pakistan would never leave their brethren in the lurch.

The participants also undertook a walk in solidarity with the Kashmir cause. A large number of female students and the district administration officials also participated. According to a district administration spokesman, Feb 5, Kashmir Solidarity Day is observed to reiterate complete solidarity with the brethren of IIOJK.

India has been keeping a major part of the internationally acknowledged disputed Himalayan Jammu Kashmir state in her illegal and forced occupation at the might of her occupational military power since October 27, 1947, against the aspirations of the people of the State.

He informed that rallies, public meetings, and seminars were held to draw the attention of the world community towards grave human rights violations and brutalities against innocent Kashmiris by the Indian security forces.

The banners highlighting the plight of innocent Kashmiris were put on display at all important points and roads, he said adding, the Education Department organized special programmes in educational institutions to draw attention towards the Kashmir issue which could not be settled down despite the clear-cut resolutions in favour of innocent people of the IIOJK.

According to Kashmir Solidarity program, Solidarity walks were organized in Islamabad, Muzaffarabad, Gilgit and four provincial capitals.

Human chains were formed at Kohala and other important points linking Pakistan and Azad Kashmir.

Radio Pakistan also broadcasted special programmes to express solidarity with the oppressed Kashmiris.

The Punjab Arts Council (PAC) also organised a photo exhibition and walk to commemorate Kashmir Solidarity Day.

The event was marked by a flag hoisting ceremony in which the flags of Pakistan and Azad Kashmir were raised as a demonstration of Kashmiri's strength and resilience. This was then followed by observing a minute's silence to honour the oppressed Kashmiris living in occupied territory. The exhibition also featured performances such as tableaux, speeches and Kashmiri song competitions which were organised with the support of the All Pakistan Private Schools Management Association.

Pakistan will never compromise on country's sovereignty, its stance on Kashmir cause: Sherry Rehman

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senator Sherry Rehman, Vice-President of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), on February 5 Kashmir Solidarity Day made it clear that Pakistan will never compromise on its sovereignty and will not allow India anymore to hold Kashmiris hostage for a long time.

Talking to a private news channel, she said that India cannot wipe the eternal love for Pakistan away from Kashmiris' hearts, adding, Modi-led government can not suppress Kashmiris' legitimate struggle by the dint of force.

There will be no dialogue with India until it reverts its decision of abrogating article 370 and 35-A in Jammu and Kashmir, she said, adding, dialogue must be resumed from the point where it was stopped.

She criticized that Modi-led government agreed to a peaceful talk with Pakistan on every issue but unfortunately they formally denied Pakistan's proposal to hold exclusive talks on the Kashmir issue.

However, it is clear that if India will not agree to hold a peaceful talk with Pakistan on Kashmir issue

seriously, we will not be hostages at the hands of Indian government, she added.

There can not be any compromise on Kashmiris' fundamental right to self-determination, she added.

It is a good development that the nation, military, and political leadership are on the same page and determined to continue moral, political and diplomatic support to the people of Kashmir, she highlighted.

Pakistan has become the voice of Kashmiris across the globe which is frustrating India, she added.

Lack of basic facilities main concern of NA-55 voters

RAWALPINDI (APP): Malik Ibrar Ahmed, candidate of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) is contesting election from NA-55, Rawalpindi-IV constituency, while 31 others including 20 independents are in the run.

Total 431,832 registered voters including 221,049 male and 210,783 female will use their right to franchise on election day.

As many as 311 polling stations including 156 male, 148 female, and seven combined will be set up in the constituency to facilitate the voters. There will be total 778 polling booths including 395 for male and 383 for female voters in Rawalpindi-IV, NA-55 constituency.

Under the polling scheme of NA-55, out of total 2956 staff, there are 311 presiding officers with 1556 assistant pre-

siding officers while 778 polling officers and 311 assistants will also perform their duties on the election-day.

Babar Sultan Jadoon, candidate of Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians, Arif Hussain Shah, Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan, Faisal Ul Hassan Khan, Tehreek Labbaik Pakistan, Muhammad Ijaz ul Haq, Pakistan Muslim League (Zia ul Haq), Nargis Jabeen, Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party and Muhammad Basharat Raja as an independent candidate are contesting elections for NA-55.

Main problems of this constituency are poor condition of several roads, sewerage system, poverty, uncovered drains and lack of other basic facilities.

Malik Safdar, a resident

of Dhoke Syedan told APP on Monday that the poor condition of several roads, sewerage system, low gas pressure, and water shortage are long-standing issues of people of this area. He said that as population is increasing, the problems in NA-55 constituency are also surging.

Faisal, a resident of Masrial Road area said that high prices of commodities and unemployment are major concerns of the people of NA-55, adding that general elections are very close and people hope that elected representatives would make sincere efforts to

solve long standing issues of people of this constituency. He said that the residents of several areas including Qasimabad, Naseerabad, Allahabad, Carriage Factory Colony, Misrial Road, Friends Colony, Dhoke Gujran, Chakra Road, Dhoke Bannaras, Afshan Colony, Chur Harpal, Range Road, Siham, Dhoke Mustaqeem, Tariqabad, Azizabad (Mughalabad), Abid Majeed Road, Tench Bhatta, Mohalla Hajian, Allama Iqbal Colony, Dispensary Ground, Mughalabad, Jan Colony, Rawal Town, Kamalabad, Dhoke Syedan, Bakra Mandi, Ghaziabad, Chamanabad, Afshan Colony, Dhoke Chudharian, Dheri Hasanabad, Tahli Mouri, and others were facing problems due to lack of basic facilities.



ISLAMABAD: Kashmiri artists performing on the stage during culture programme on the occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day organized by Department of Sports, Youth and Culture of Azad Jammu and Kashmir at Lok Virsa.

Germany provides over \$5m

KABUL (Khaama Press): The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has announced that Germany has contributed \$5.4 million to the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund. On Monday, February 5th, OCHA expressed gratitude for Germany's 5 million donation to humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan through a message posted on its social media platform X.

Railway sector

KABUL (Khaama Press): Afghanistan Railway Authority's (ARA) CEO Bakhtur Rahman Sharaf met with a delegation of executives from Gama, a multinational company, to discuss various opportunities including railways and mining. Sharaf said at the meeting that investment in the railway sector would be welcomed as it would help develop the economy. Members of the executive committee of Gama said the company wants to invest in the railway sector in exchange for rights to extract minerals.

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

Islamic Emirate addresses issues in all regions: Hanafi



KABUL (BNA): Mullah Abdul Salam Hanafi, the Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs, met with a group of scholars, mujahideen, and district governors from the eighteen districts of Ghazni province. During the meeting, they discussed social, security, and local government activities in the mentioned districts. The group recognized the sacrifices, valor, and efforts of the Islamic Emirate's mujahideen to implement the guidance of the leadership and maintain security and well-being for the people. They also urged the officials to strengthen local administrations, address health issues, and initiate developmental projects in the province. Deputy Prime Minister Hanafi acknowledged the efforts of the Islamic Emirate are a result of the struggles, sacrifices, and martyrdom of thousands of scholars, youth, women and children in the region. He emphasized the commitment of the Islamic Emirate officials to identify and address the needs of the people within their capabilities. Finally, he assured that the Islamic Emirate will take action to address the issues and undertake developmental projects in all districts with available resources.

Minister of Transport and Iranian Envoy discuss expansion of ground and air communications

KABUL (BNA): Mullah Hamidullah Akhundzada, the Acting Minister of Transport and Aviation, met with Hasan Kazemi Qomi, the special envoy of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran for Afghanistan and the Iranian ambassador in Kabul. They discussed the expansion of ground and air transport communications between the two countries. The Ministry of Transport and Aviation stated that the meeting focused on ongoing transportation collaborations, facilitating further developments in ground and air transportation, increasing Afghanistan's exports to Iran via road and rail transport, and utilizing the Cha Bahar port for the export and import of Afghan commercial goods.



Acting Minister of Public Health stresses on standard health services during Balkh visit

KABUL (BNA): During his visit to Balkh, the Acting Minister of Public Health, Dr. Qalandar Ebad, met with the province's governor, Muhammad Yusuf Wafa. The purpose of Dr. Ebad's visit was to inspect the services of public health departments and government hospitals in the northern zone, listen to the concerns and requests of professional and specialized doctors, and provide assurances to all personnel in various areas. Dr. Ebad highlighted that in the past twenty years, the health sector in the northern zone had been neglected and services were not extended to remote districts. However, with the establishment of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, health services have been provided to all provinces and remote districts of the country. He emphasized that following the guidance of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, the Ministry of Public Health and provincial departments should strive to provide standard health services to every corner of the nation. The governor of Balkh welcomed Dr. Ebad and his delegation, expressing gratitude for their visit to the northern zone to understand the challenges and demands of the public health departments, and to work towards resolving these issues to improve services. He requested additional focus on the Balkh Regional Hospital.



Afghanistan's embassy in Beijing starts distributing passports

KABUL (Ariana News): The Embassy of the Islamic Emirate in Beijing said Monday in a post on X that the distribution of passports to Afghans residing in China has started. According to the embassy, Afghans in the country who are in need of passports can also now apply for the travel document directly through the embassy. Asadullah Bilal Karimi is the ambassador of the Islamic Emirate in China. His credentials were accepted by Chinese President Xi Jinping last week. China, like other countries, does not recognize the Islamic Emirate, but has handed over the Afghan embassy in Beijing to the Islamic Emirate.



Global climate change conference to be held next week at Nangarhar University



the global community. Abdul Salam Hagani, the deputy director of the National Environmental Protection Agency, emphasized the significance of this conference and added, "We hope to be able to share the research results and scientific knowledge about climate change and its negative effects with the world." This conference takes place while the United Nations had previously declared that Afghanistan is facing the "worst drought" in the last 30 years. It is worth noting that Afghanistan's economy, primarily reliant on agriculture and livestock, is expected to suffer negative consequences due to the drought, which will have a profound impact on the food security of the country's population.

NANGARHAR (Khaama Press): The Ministry of Higher Education and the National Environmental Protection Agency announced during a joint session that an international climate change conference will be held at Nangarhar University next week. Dr. Latifullah Khair Khwa, the academic advisor of the Ministry of Higher Education, stated during a press conference on Monday, February 5th, that Nangarhar University will host an international conference on climate change next week. According to Mr. Khair Khwa, in addition to presenting 140 scientific papers and research at this conference, efforts will be made to share the scientific findings on climate change and existing damages in Afghanistan with

1.8 million people caught respiratory illness in one month: Health Ministry

KABUL (Khaama Press): After the World Health Organization reported on the increase in acute respiratory infections in Afghanistan, the Ministry of Public Health of the Taliban government also confirmed the rise of this disease in the country. Shirafat Zaman, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Public Health of Afghanistan, announced on Monday, 5th February, in a recorded message, the confirmation of the increase in this disease in the country and stated that cases of respiratory illness have increased in various parts of the country. According to the spokesperson of the Ministry of Public Health, nearly 1.8 million people have been affected by respiratory illness in the first month of 2024. The World Health Organization recently reported an increase in acute respiratory infections in Afghanistan in the last two weeks of January 2024, with nearly 84,000 cases of acute respiratory illness registered in the country during these two weeks. The World Health Organization's report also indicates that from the beginning of January to the 27th of the month, 160,756 cases of acute respiratory infections have been registered in Afghanistan, with 383 individuals losing their lives due to this disease in 34 provinces of Afghanistan. However, according to the spokesperson for the Ministry of Public Health, the mortality rate from respiratory diseases in the current year has decreased compared to the same period last year due to the establishment of new health centres in various parts of the country. He also mentioned that the World Health Organization confirms this. The World Health Organization has warned that polluted and toxic air can lead to serious risks such as strokes, heart diseases, lung cancer, shortness of breath, and other chronic and acute respiratory illnesses. Nevertheless, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Public Health emphasized the need to promptly transfer children affected by respiratory diseases to health centers to prevent fatalities caused by the disease. It should be noted that the World Health Organization registered one million three hundred eighty-five thousand cases of acute respiratory illness and around 2,800 deaths caused by it in its covered health centers in Afghanistan from the beginning to the end of 2023.

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IBHARI launches 'Gender Apartheid' Investigation in Afghanistan and Iran

Hakim Bigzaam The International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI) reports that, in coordination with several members of the British Parliament, it has launched an investigation into the situation of women in Afghanistan and Iran. The IBAHRI currently has this issue under scrutiny. While international law does not explicitly criminalize "gender apartheid," the IBAHRI states on its website that what women in Afghanistan and Iran experience qualifies as "gender apartheid." According to the institute, women lawyers, politicians, scholars, and human rights defenders in Afghanistan and Iran, along with international activists and experts, are demanding the recognition of the status of women and girls in both countries as a form of gender apartheid. The institute's website highlights that women in Afghanistan and Iran are at a stage of societal exclusion, and an examination of their situation as "gender apartheid" is deemed essential. It should be noted that United Nations experts have referred to the restrictions imposed on women's lives in Afghanistan as "sexual harassment." However, Richard Bennett, the UN Human Rights Rapporteur on Afghanistan, stated in his April report that what women in this country endure could be reconsidered as an instance of gender apartheid. Richard Goldstone, a retired judge from the Constitutional Court of South Africa, stated: "In South Africa, systematic discrimination against the majority of its population based on race was practised. That was apartheid. Therefore, in Afghanistan and Iran, systematic discrimination against all women and girls is practised." Mr. Goldstone added that the recognition of gender apartheid in international law is considered essential. In Iran, women do not have free choice in selecting their fields of study, while in Afghanistan, educating and teaching girls is prohibited. In the former, women are banned from working, entering public places such as parks and restaurants, and traveling under the rule of the Taliban regime. Khaama Press



KARACHI: Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari waving to supporters during election campaign rally.

Bilawal holds rally in Karachi

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Chairman Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has said that he is the son of Karachi and if the people give him a chance on February 8, he will change the landscape of the metropolis through public service and development.

He urged the Karachiites to reject those elements selling mixture of hatred and division, who forget Karachi every time they become part of the federal government by bargaining on the rights of the city.

According to the press release issued by Media Cell Bilawal House, the PPP chairman is leading a grand rally in 'Quaid's City' in connection with his nationwide election campaign, which started from Bilawal House Chowranghi Karachi. The rally passed through Shirin Jinnah Colony, Tara Chand Road, Kemari, Machhi Miani and Khara Dar and reached Chakiwara Lyari, from where it will reach Malir via different parts of the city, while its final destination will be Dawood Chowranghi.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, while addressing different places, said that he has campaigned in every area of the four provinces, but Karachi is different in this regard. "Karachi is my own city. Not only was I born here, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto was also born in the same city of Karachi. When I say that I want to serve Karachi, (and) play my role in the development of Karachi, then (that means) I want to take care of my own home," he added.

Pakistan People's Party thanked Karachiites for their support to his party in the recent local body elections, saying: "I am thankful to the people of Karachi for trusting me and not only winning from Kemari, but also from the entire city and electing a Jiyala mayor for the first time in history." He further said that even on February 8, the people of Karachi should trust him and make the PPP candidates successful. "This will be the first time in history, not only will the local government system be in my hands, Insha Allah the provincial government will also be in my hands, and if you are with me, the federal government will

also be in my hands," he told the charged crowd.

He said that if the people vote for the PPP candidates contesting on 20 seats of Karachi, then he will transform the city through dedicated public service and development in the next five years. "Other parties are contesting elections for their own interests. I am contesting elections for the rights of the people," he pointed out.

Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that the people should also compare the other parties which are contesting against the PPP in the general elections. "These parties are doing politics of hatred and division, selling some Churan (mixture) or the other," he said, adding that someone is trying to divide Karachi on the basis of religion, some language and some communalism. "On February 8, you (people) should stamp the Arrow (symbol on ballot paper) and answer these forces that this is the Karachi of all of us. We will not allow anyone to try to divide on the basis of hatred. This city has made many sacrifices because of the politics of violence, they are part of history," he added.

The PPP chairman said that in the February 8 general elections, the real contest is between only two parties, saying: "One is the party with the Tiger symbol and the other is your city's party with the Teer." He urged the people to reject those indulging in politics of hatred and division as well as not to support independent candidates, as the move would amount to wasting their votes. "Karachi Walo (People of Karachi)! Give me a chance this time, you give your brother a chance. I will not disappoint you. I want to undertake (development) work in Karachi's every nook and corner. If you want to solve the problems facing the metropolis, then once you have to support the PPP," he urged.

He said that Karachi's votes were robbed in the past, but now people will not allow anyone to steal their mandate. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari once again appealed to the public to come up with full support for the PPP candidates in February 8 polls. He also took an oath from his party candidates that they would serve the people without any discrimination after winning the election.

Israel's 'chilling disregard' for life in Gaza

WEST BANK: Israel has unleashed unlawful lethal force against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, carrying out unlawful killings and displaying "a chilling disregard for Palestinian lives", Amnesty International says.

The human rights organisation said in a report released on Monday that Israel's actions in the territory have intensified during its war on Gaza and its military and other bodies are committing numerous illegal acts of violence that amount to clear violations of international law. The world's eyes are mostly on the Gaza Strip, where the Israeli military has killed more than 27,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, since the start of the war on October 7. But Israeli forces are also carrying out unlawful killings in occupied Palestinian territories, Amnesty said in the report.

The document was compiled with remote interviews with witnesses, first responders and local residents as well as verified videos and photos. "Under the cover of the relentless bombardment and atrocity crimes in Gaza, Israeli forces have unleashed unlawful lethal force against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, carrying out unlawful killings and displaying a chilling disregard for Palestinian lives," said Erika Guevara-Rosas, Amnesty International's director of global research, advocacy and policy.

"These unlawful killings are in blatant violation of international human rights law and are committed with impunity in the context of maintaining Israel's institutionalized regime of systematic oppression and domination over Palestinians." — Arab News

Blinken arrives in Riyadh

RIYADH (AFP): US Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived in Riyadh on Monday, on the first stop of his fifth regional tour since the beginning of the Israel-Gaza war. He is expected to meet with senior Saudi officials and discuss the situation in Gaza. Blinken is later expected to visit Israel, Egypt and Qatar.

Ahead of the trip he stressed the need for "urgently addressing humanitarian needs in Gaza," after aid groups have repeatedly sounded the alarm over the devastating impact nearly four months of war have had on the besieged territory. The health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said at least 27,478 people have been killed in the territory in nearly four months of war between Palestinian militants and Israel. A ministry statement said 66,835 people have been wounded since fighting erupted on Oct. 7.

Meanwhile, after a week-end of retaliatory strikes, the United States warned Iran and the militias it arms and funds that it will conduct more attacks if American forces in the Mideast continue to be targeted, but that it does not want an "opened military campaign" across the region. "We are prepared to deal with anything that any group or any country tries to come at us with," said Jake Sullivan, President Joe Biden's national security adviser. Sullivan said Iran should expect "a swift and forceful response" if it — and not one of its proxies — "chose to respond directly" against the US.

No guidelines to shut down internet on election day

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Monday said that the government had not issued any guideline to shut down internet and mobile signals on the day of general election.

Speaking in a private news channel programme, the minister said that the local administrations had the authority to decide about shutting down internet in a specific area if it faced any law and order issue. He said there was no doubt that an extraordinary situation required extraordinary measures, however, so far no such a situation had been reported in any area.

Highlighting the government's measures to curb fake news and propaganda on social media, the minister said the relevant institutions had been issuing clarification to rebut any such news circulating in different media. "Security is a serious issue," he said, while pointing out a steep rise in activities of different terrorist groups in the country, especially after the establishment an interim government in Kabul.

"Last year alone, around 1,500 incidents of terrorism were reported in the country," Murtaza Solangi noted. Police cops were martyred in a terrorist attack on a police station in the Dera Ismail Khan, he said, adding such acts had failed to affect the resolve of law enforcement agencies fighting terrorism in the country.

He noted that recently, 24 terrorists were killed in Mach area of Balochistan. The minister ruled out any delay in the elections which were scheduled for February 8. The history of Pakistan suggested that the elections were held in harsh and difficult conditions. To a query, he said the Kashmir dispute was a long-standing issue on the agenda of the United Nations Security Council.

He recalled that some 75 years ago, the then Indian prime minister promised in the United Nations Security Council that the Kashmiri people would be given their right to self-determination so that they could

Media helpline launched for redressal of journalists' complaints: Solangi

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi said on Monday that the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MOIB) was launching the media helpline to redress the complaints of both local and foreign journalists during elections.

Addressing the helpline's launching ceremony, he said in the present era of digital media it was imperative to upgrade and improve working. The media-complaint application would accessible through any browser to both local and international journalists and media-persons covering the general election 2024, he added. The minister said that the caretaker government, which was formed under Article 224 of the Constitution, helped the Election Commission of Pakistan in every way to ensure a free and transparent election within the timeframe announced by the latter.

decide their own destiny. "On August 5, 2019, India changed the status of Kashmir by taking unilateral and illegal actions," he said while regretting that the Indian government deprived the Kashmiris of their rights by abolishing Article 370 of the Indian Constitution. He said the government and the people of Pakistan would continue to extend their moral, legal and diplomatic support to the people of Kashmir.

To another query, the minister clarified that the caretaker government had no favourites in the elections and the statement of the Pakistan Peoples Party chairman in that regard was "unfortunate". The minister reiterated that the caretaker government was ensuring a level-playing field for all the political parties and the state media was giving due coverage to all of them. Solangi said all-out efforts were being made to ensure equal treatment to all the political parties, but ironically "complaining is part of Pakistan's political culture".

The PML-N had complaints of an uneven playing field in Sindh, while the PPP in Punjab and Maulana Fazlur Rehman in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, he said, adding that the matter of level-playing field was being politicized for political gains. He believed that the people of Pakistan would come out on the election day in a large number to elect the

parties of their choice. To another query, he said there had been a significant increase in the number of registered voters for the general elections 2024. The number of women voters alone was increased by 2 million, he added.

The proportion of the submission and acceptance of nomination papers for the elections 2024 was higher than the previous ones, he noted. A helpline, he said, had been established for quick redressal of the complaints of local and foreign journalists and observers. The minister urged the citizens to express their love for the country by exercising their right to vote on the election day. "It is clearly written in the preamble of the Constitution that the country will be run by its elected representatives," he said while regretting a persistent propaganda about the election delay.

The caretaker government from the very beginning held a stance that the elections would be conducted on time, he added. The minister said the caretaker government would stand dissolved following the election of the Leader of House in the National Assembly and oath-taking of the newly elected prime minister. To another query, Solangi said the caretaker government would pass on a "handover note" to the next elected government about its achievements and failures.

Navy, Maritime Agency save lives of seamen

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Navy in coordination with Pakistan Maritime Security Agency saved the lives of 9 Indian seamen at sea. An Ocean Tug SAS-5 registered at St Kitts & Nevis was disabled for last few days near the Indian coast at a position 167 NM South East of Karachi. The tug suffered a failure of its electrical generators and had no electrical supply.

In early morning of 04 Feb 24, Pakistan Navy Joint Maritime Information and Coordination Center (JMICC) received a distress signal from the Ocean. The Tug began its voyage from Indian port of Debolat at Maharashtra on 1st Feb 24 and was heading to Sharjah, UAE.

Upon receipt of information, Pakistan Navy in coordination with HQ PMSA generated response to initiate a Search & Rescue Operation to provide assistance to the stranded Tug. Initially, PN Long Range Maritime Patrol Aircraft was tasked to locate the tug at sea followed by a Search and Rescue operation by Pakistan Maritime Security

Ship (PMSS) KASHMIR which was deployed on routine Maritime Security Operations in the area.

Upon reaching the distressed Tug, PMSS KASHMIR secured the Tug alongside and after three hours of strenuous repair efforts the defect was rectified. Besides technical assistance, medical facilities, fresh water and cooked meals were also provided to the fatigued crew of the Tug. Upon completion of SAR operation, the tug successfully resumed its voyage towards next port of call at Sharjah UAE.

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HYDERABAD: Workers of Election Commission and police officials busy in sorting and distribution of bags of election material.

India a terrorist state

(Continued from Page 1)

cratic manner in order to take democracy forward.

He said the idea of democracy was facing many challenges in Pakistan due to different reasons and weaknesses in the structure of the civil institutions. He said the Afghan refugees lived in Pakistan for decades, and used the health and education services and the infrastructure of Pakistan and their businesses earned billions of dollars through the Afghan transit trade.

The prime minister asserted that Pakistan wanted a friendly government in Afghanistan as was the desire of other countries in the region. He was of the view that the government of Taliban was formed in Afghanistan after the world squandered its opportunities despite spending \$ 2 trillion.

He said the Taliban forcefully took over the government as the United States and NATO abandoned Afghanistan. To a

question, he said during his tenure, he interacted with the students from the educational institutions of Balochistan, Azad Kashmir, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh and Balochistan, and shared his views with them and listened to their perspectives.

He said in Balochistan, armed insurgents were masquerading as civil society and speaking the language of human rights for achieving a certain goal. Those elements never belonged to a mainstream political party but were part of the proscribed organizations in the province, he added.

PM Kakar said some groups in Balochistan wanted to carve out a new country on the basis of identity and through armed struggle, and they had declared a war on the state of Pakistan.

The stance of those elements was against morality, and the Constitution and laws of Pakistan, he remarked. The prime minister said most of the people

left the country for better jobs and due to economic reasons, however, millions of youth saw their future in Pakistan.

Those people who send remittances from abroad were assets of Pakistan and they were contributing to its economic growth, he remarked. He opined that there were many people who wanted to return to Pakistan after living their lives in Europe and North America. In future, more people will return to Pakistan because of their Islamic roots and attachment to eastern values, he observed.

He said during his tenure he tried to take decisions in the best interest of Pakistan. After leaving the office of caretaker prime minister, Kakar said he would like to serve in the Senate of Pakistan. He said the caretaker government assisted the Election Commission for the holding of elections which would take place on February 8 despite all the speculations.

Controversy after US adult performer visits Iran

TEHRAN: An adult performer from the United States has stirred controversy after visiting Iran and going to the former US embassy in Tehran. Whitney Wright, 32, from Oklahoma arrived in Iran last week, and confirmed on her social media on Monday that she has left the country.

She posted several pictures of her visit, including one that went viral that showed her — in a headscarf and unrevealing clothing required in Iran — standing next to a lowered US flag at the site of the country's former embassy. Iranian authorities have said the embassy was a "den of espionage" before its takeover in the aftermath of the 1979 Iranian Revolution and have since turned it into a museum. It is where embassy staff were held for 444 days, exacerbating hostilities that reverberate across Iran-US relations even now.

Wright wrote on her Instagram account that she was eager to visit the embassy along with other museums in Tehran and suggested the backlash and negative attention online she has received are extreme. "I'm sharing exhibits from a museum that are never seen," Wright wrote on Instagram. "It's not an endorsement of the government."

Some critics alleged that her visit highlights inconsistencies from the Iranian authorities. Wright's profession is considered "obscene" by Iranian authorities and could in theory lead to criminal charges. Her visit came after Iran in 2022 and early 2023 saw some of the largest public protests and unrest since the 1979 revolution, triggered by the death of Mahsa Amini.

The 22-year-old died in the custody of Iran's morality police after being detained for alleged non-compliance with the mandatory hijab, which has been in force since shortly after the revolution. The issues of being required to wear hijab by law and women's freedom were at the centre of a lot of the protests. Iranian authorities have also engaged in a variety of efforts to enforce the hijab rules since the protests have died down.

Actor Setareh Pesiani referred to Wright's visit to criticise the government's mandatory headscarf policy. "You punish people of this country in various methods for removal of hijab but you allow a porn actress to come here to tour Iran!?" Pesiani wrote on Instagram. — Aab News