

Earthquake jolts Khuzdar F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: An earthquake measuring 4.4 on the Richter scale jolted Khuzdar and its adjoining areas on Tuesday, no casualties were reported so far. According to the seismological center, the depth of the earthquake was 24 kilometers, while the epicenter was southwest of Khuzdar, a private news channel reported. People came out of their houses in fear by reciting Kalma-e-Tayyaba.



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Cabinet okays restructuring of PIA

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Cabinet on Tuesday approved the restructuring of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) on the recommendation of the Privatization Division.

The cabinet, in its previous meeting approved the appointment of a financial advisor for financial and administrative restructuring of the airlines. The cabinet, in a meeting chaired by Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar was told that the financial advisor had formulated a financial restructuring plan of PIA in line with international precedents under which the airlines will be divided into two companies, Top-Co and Hold-Co.

PIA's core operations of engineering, ground handling, cargo, flight kitchen and training will be incorporated into Top-Co while other entities such as Precision Engineering Complex, PIA Investment Limited and others subsidiaries and properties will be incorporated in Hold-Co. These measures will help attract capital investors to PIA. The cabinet also directed the cabinet sub-committee on Privatization to deal with the matters related to settlement of government-owned enterprises with PIA as soon as possible.

On the recommendation of the ministry of Privatization, cabinet also approved the privatization of First Women Bank Limited. The cabinet on the recommendation of the Ministry of National Health approved the proposals regarding de-regulation of the prices of the medicines which were not included in the national list of essential medicines.

Under these proposals, prices of medicines other than essential medicines in the national list will be exempted from the Drugs Act, 1976 and necessary amendments will be made in the Drug Pricing Policy 2018. Furthermore, the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council will ensure that doctors will not prescribe vitamins, multivitamins, minerals and over-the-counter products to the patients.

The Drug Regulatory Authority will compile a list of vitamins, multivitamins, minerals and over-the-counter products as per the prevailing international standards and will also be in touch with the provincial governments in this regard. The cabinet also approved the decisions taken in the meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee held on February 01, 2024.

Meanwhile the cabinet approved the appointment of Lt. General Tahir Hameed Shah as a member and chairman of the Pakistan Ordnance Factories Board on the recommendation of the Ministry of Defense Production. The appointment of Lt. General Tahir Hameed Shah will be effective from November 29, 2023.

On the recommendation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the cabinet allowed Major Abid Mansoor Khan to receive award of "Note-e-Shujaat" and "Note-e-Sharf" from the Ministry of Defense of Saudi Arabia in recognition of his services. The Federal Cabinet, on the recommendation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, gave permission to Protocol Officer Mohammad Ashraf Khan to receive a gold medal from the Government of Austria in recognition of his services.

Likewise the cabinet, on the recommendation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also gave permission to Air Commodore Syed Imran Ali to receive "Defense Cooperation Award First Class" award in recognition of his services as Defense Attaché at the Pakistani Embassy in Tokyo. On the recommendation of the Ministry of Law and Justice and the proposal of the Chief Justice of Peshawar High Court, the cabinet approved the conversion of 4 out of 8 accountability courts in Peshawar into special courts. Apart from this, the proposal of Chief Justice Peshawar High Court was also approved by the cabinet regarding the appointment of judges of these courts. The remaining courts will continue to function as accountability courts. These changes will not incur any additional burden on the national exchequer.



KARACHI: Election Commission officials busy in setting of election material ahead of general election.

PTI pleads before SC to review 'bat' symbol

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: With just two days left for Pakistan's 10th general elections, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) is yet again trying to reclaim its electoral symbol 'bat', as it has filed a plea with the Supreme Court to review the verdict ordering its withdrawal.

The party has also moved the apex court on Tuesday seeking a review of the decision about PTI's intra-party polls. PTI — whose founder Imran Khan remains behind bars in multiple cases — has requested the apex court to review its January 13 decision where in the top court upheld the Election Commission of Pakistan's verdict declaring PTI's intra-party polls "unconstitutional," depriving the party of its iconic electoral symbol.

The plea by PTI requested the SC to review its verdict and restore the decision of the Peshawar High Court, which termed the ECP's decision "invalid" on January 10. The PHC decision was announced following the hearing of PTI's petition challenging the ECP's decision declaring the intra-party election as null and void and revoking their electoral symbol "bat". PTI's petition also stated that its intra-party elections held in December

were conducted as per the party's constitution.

"Election Commission is not empowered to review intra-party elections," PTI pleads in its petition to SC. Last month, a three-member SC bench — headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa and comprising Justice Muhammad Ali Jazhar and Justice Musarrat Hilali — annulled PHC's January 10 order, depriving the former ruling party of its 'iconic' electoral symbol — bat. The five-page verdict stated that the apex court judges "do not agree with the learned judges [of the PHC] that the ECP did not have 'any jurisdiction to question or adjudicate the intra-party elections of a political party'".

It stated that accepting any such interpretation would render all provisions in the Election Act, 2017, that require the holding of intra-party elections "illusory and of no consequence and be redundant". The verdict stated that since the ECP had been calling upon PTI to hold its intra-party elections since 24 May 2021, the time when the party was in power, "it cannot be stated that ECP was victimising PTI".

In its reasoning for today's verdict, the top court stated that the PTI's petition filed in the PHC

was "not maintainable" as it failed to disclose that another similar petition was pending before the five-member bench of the Lahore High Court (LHC). The apex court underscored that although a petitioner "may elect to avail of his remedy before either court, but having chosen a particular court the same dispute cannot then be taken to the other court".

Voters with expired identity card can cast votes: ECP F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Voters having expired national identity card can cast their votes in the upcoming general elections to be held on Thursday (February 8).

Spokesman of Election Commission of Pakistan KP, Sohail Ahmad told APP that all those voters whose identity cards are expired are eligible for casting votes. However, he continued, all the voters have to take the original copy of their identity card to the polling station otherwise they would not be allowed to exercise their right of franchise.

Govt ensures best arrangements for polls: PM F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Tuesday said that despite numerous challenges, the best possible arrangements had been made to ensure peaceful and seamless conduct of elections on polling day, across the country.

He was talking to a delegation of the Commonwealth Observer Group (COG), led by former President of Nigeria Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, who called on him, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. The meeting was part of the COG's interaction with various stakeholders ahead of the upcoming general elections on 8th February, 2024.

The prime minister welcomed the COG delegation and said that Pakistan was proud to honour its commitment as a Commonwealth member state by inviting independent international observers to witness the general elections. He also highlighted that the caretaker government had fulfilled its responsibilities to run the day-to-day affairs of the state and create a conducive environment ahead of the elections.

Now it was the turn of the people of Pakistan to exercise their democratic right to vote, he added. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan thanked the caretaker prime minister and conveyed best wishes of the Secretary General of the Commonwealth Patricia Scotland. He said the COG delegation would be visiting various polling sites throughout the country to observe the election process.

Politics of 'hate' puts country into trouble: PPP F.P. Report

LARKANA: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said on Monday old politicians put the country in danger by involving in the politics of hate.

He made this remark while addressing an electoral rally. The former foreign minister added that the people of the city have always stood with the Bhutto family.

The PPP chief mentioned that old politicians did not know anything besides divisionary politics, adding the people should better get rid of this traditional politics.

"When a person from Larkana becomes the prime minister, the country becomes a nuclear power and the country develops by leaps and bounds. "People should give me votes as the country has not seen a Larkana PM for a long time," he added.

The PPP chief said the economy suffered immeasurably due to the stubbornness and ego of the old politicians as they have introduced the abuse culture in politics. He said, "people are well aware who wants to become PM for the fourth time despite getting enough opportunity to provide people the basic necessities."

Naqvi elected new PCB chief F.P. Report

LAHORE: In a recent development for the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), Mohsin Naqvi has been elected unopposed as the new chairman for PCB for a three-year tenure, says in media reports.

The decision was reached during the PCB Governing Board meeting held today at the National Cricket Academy. The eagerly awaited announcement came after a key gathering hosted at the prestigious National Cricket Academy, where representatives from diverse regions and organizations convened to participate in the electoral process.



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

Info minister vows zero tolerance against arms display during polls

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Provincial Caretaker Minister for Information Muhammad Ahmed Shah said on Tuesday that zero tolerance would be shown against the display of arms during the election and those displaying arms would be arrested.

Addressing a press conference at the Sindh Assembly building, Shah expressed gratitude to the media for continuously providing coverage and keeping everyone informed about the current situation. He said that yesterday meetings were held with the commissioners and officials from all districts in Larkana, including all DCs and officials from all departments.

The meetings were also held in Sukkur and Hyderabad, where discussions were held with DCs and election commissioners from nine districts. Shah said that they had individually inquired from each participant if they were under any pressure and urged them to report immediately if any political party exerted pressure.

The Sindh information minister said that clear instructions had been given to ensure transparent elections, and no one would be allowed to take law into their hands on the election day. He said: "There is a zero tolerance policy regarding the display of weapons." Shah said that those caught displaying weapons would be arrested, and FIRs would be lodged against them. He stated: "Temporary polling stations are being set up near riverine areas, and ballot papers have been delivered to district headquarters." Ballot papers would also be distributed in Karachi from tomorrow, he added. The information minister provided insights into the Apex Committee meeting and highlighted the presence of high-ranking officials from all agencies, emphasizing the establishment of control rooms in each division's headquarters. He underscored the importance of the Information Department activating

Interior Minister briefed on upcoming election

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Caretaker Federal Minister for Interior, Dr. Gohar Ejaz, met top officials of the provincial government, at Chief Secretary's office Peshawar, to discuss the ongoing security arrangements for the upcoming polls, across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The caretaker minister was briefed by top officials responsible for the conduct of General Election 2024. Ejaz emphasized the significance of contingency plans in case the online system of ECP failed and asked the top-officials of the provincial bureaucracy to ensure efficiency of backup mechanisms through pre-polls drill exercises.

The caretaker federal minister praised the effort put in to develop the online application for the conduct of GE-2024 i.e. the "Provincial Election Workspace" that would conduct polls through more than fifteen thousand polling stations across the province. The caretaker minister was briefed on significant issues such as ramps for disabled persons, generators for backup, snap check posts, emergency plans developed for health department and Rescue 1122, transportation plans for ballot boxes and the backup offline dashboards and infrastructure developed in case telecommunications services faced any interruptions.

Dr. Gohar Ejaz praised the concerned officials for successful undertaking of mock exercises and drills to ensure smooth conduct of general election on February 8th. The minister was briefed about the security plan and KP Govt.'s preparations for February 8, 2024 general election in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including merged tribal districts here at Chief Secretary KP Office. Chief minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Arshad Hussain Shah, Chief Secretary Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry, IGP KP Akhtar Hayat Gandapur, Commandant Frontier Constabulary Moazzam Jah Ansari and other senior officials were also present during the top level meeting. Dr Gohar Ejaz added that provision of security to voters was the top priority of the Government and no compromise would be made on law and order situation during upcoming election in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including merged tribal districts.

the Election Cell from tomorrow. Moreover, he assured the continuous presence of medical staff in the hospitals across the Sindh province and the completion of military deployments.

Coordination between police, rangers, and the military had been prioritized, with strict directives issued for the complete protection of ballot papers upon their return. Sensing the significance of sensitive districts, Shah emphasized heightened vigilance in these areas.

He expressing concerns over potential terrorist activities and asserted readiness to tackle any such

incidents effectively. "Intelligence operations have been completed in vulnerable areas. Pakistan's armed forces, government, and agencies are on same page," Shah said and stressed that vigilance would persist not only on election day but also in the post-election period. He urged all political leaders to focus on serving the underprivileged people beyond mere success formulas. Notably, the Apex Committee did not deliberate on the suspension of mobile services, indicating no immediate concern regarding this matter.

Nawaz: PML-N will make Pakistan 'Asian Tiger'

F.P. Report

KASUR: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supreme leader Muhammad Nawaz Sharif has said that his party was completely supported by the country's youth and he will make Pakistan an 'Asian Tiger'.

While addressing a public gathering in Khudian area of Kasur on Tuesday, he pledged to provide employment to every individual it PML-N was voted to power. Nawaz Sharif further stated, "We have to come out of this era; we have to make the country an 'Asian Tiger'. Shehbaz Sharif should utilise this passion for Pakistan and change the country's destiny."

He said that the PML-N government would make the road of Khudian better

than of those in Paris, establish universities for youth besides providing laptops and computers to them. The former prime minister said that their government would provide jobs to the youth of Khudian.

He also promised to build stadium in Khudian. He said that he would bring Shehbaz Sharif to inaugurate it, and they would play the opening match in this stadium. Nawaz Sharif said, "Those who used to say that the youth will get 10 million jobs, where are those jobs and where have the houses gone?"

He said, "Vegetables were available at Rs10 per kg during my tenure as PM, roti was available for Rs4." The PML-N supreme further said, "We are holding the last rally in Khudian and hoped that the youth

present here will join us on Feb 8. The enthusiasm of the youth is exemplary."

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader, Marriyum Aurangzeb has also said that her party would establish a new city for overseas Pakistanis if voted to power. She stated this while talking to media persons in the provincial capital Lahore on Tuesday.

Marriyum Aurangzeb said that the PML-N would implement its manifesto in true letter and spirit. She further stated that PML-N supreme Muhammad Nawaz Sharif will fulfill every promise with the people of the country. The PML-N leader said that her party has never made hollow claims and verbal pledges and always accomplished what it promised to the countrymen and voters.

Top court allow Bilawal to contest election

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Hours before the elections 2024 in the country, a petition has been filed in the Supreme Court challenging the January 23 verdict of the Sindh High Court (SHC) allowing PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari to contest the election on the symbol "arrow", an electoral symbol allotted to PPP-P.

Last month, Shah Mohammad Zaman, the petitioner, moved the SHC seeking disqualification of

Bilawal for allegedly concealing facts by way of misrepresentation and contesting the Pakistan election on the symbol of the "arrow" of the party that was in fact led by his father Asif Ali Zardari.

He had submitted in the petition that Bilawal was chairman of the PPP with the allotted election symbol of sword while he contested elections in 2018 from the National Assembly constituency NA-200 from the platform of PPP-P with the allotted symbol of arrow, which was illegal. In his

fresh petition in the top court, the petitioner argued that as per the Elections Act, 2017 section 203, a person shall not be a member of more than one political party at a time.

The plaintiff argued that Bilawal did not suspend his membership nor resigned from the chairman of the PPP till to date and contesting the Pakistan election being the nominated candidate of another political party, adding that it was a clear violation of section 203 of the Elections Act, 2017.

OGRA jacks up gas tariff F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In compliance with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) demand, the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) has further jacked up gas tariff by 35.13 per cent for the masses, who are already reeling under heavy and unaffordable bills, says in media reports.

As per details, the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) has increased the gas tariff of Sui Northern by 35.13 per cent and Sui Southern by 8.57 per cent. This is the second gas price hike in the current financial year 2023-24. The rate of per MMBTU for Sui Northern has been agreed to be fixed at Rs1673.82 after an increase of Rs435.14. For Sui Northern, the rate of MMBTU will be Rs1466.40 after an increase of Rs115.72. The recommendations have been forwarded to the caretaker federal government.

Furthermore, OGRA has sanctioned the transfer of the burden of a 10 per cent super tax on company profits to consumers. Despite government directives to prevent the passing on of the levy to consumers, this move has been approved. In another development, Sui Northern has been granted permission to establish an office in Kirk, with an annual expenditure allocation of Rs 10 crore. The approval of these measures by OGRA marks significant changes in the gas tariff structure, placing an additional financial burden on consumers amid ongoing challenges faced by the gas companies.



LAHORE: A convoy of army personnel patrols along a road in the city to develop a sense of protection among the masses and maintain law and order situation during the General Election 2024. —APP Photo

CM once again reviews police deployment at polling stations

KARACHI (APP): Caretaker Chief Minister Sindh Justice (ret'd) Maqbool Baqar chaired 30th Provincial Apex Committee meeting at CM House to review election arrangements and national action plan tasks.

The meeting was attended by provincial ministers, Brig. (ret'd) Haris Nawaz, Omar Soomro, Ahmad Shah, Corps Commander Lt. Gen. Babar Iftikhar, Chief Secretary Dr. Fakhre Alam, DG Rangers Major Gen. Azhar Waqas, IG Police Riffat Mukhtar, Advocate General Hassan Akbar, Chairman P&D Shakil Mangnejo, Home Secretary Iqbal Memon, PG Fayaz Shah.

During the Apex committee meeting, the chief minister reviewed the arrangements for the upcoming election. The committee was informed that there would be a total of 19,008 polling stations, including 5,657 normal, 6,550 sensitive, and 6,801 highly sensitive ones.

IG Police Riffat Mukhtar shared the police deployment criteria, stating that four police personnel would be deployed at a normal polling station, five at a sensitive one, and seven at a highly sensitive polling station.

A total of 143,156 police personnel would be deployed at the polling stations, including 95,400 at the normal polling stations, 10,648 in the QRF

Police, and 37,108 in the Auxiliary Force. Additionally, the Rangers and Army would be deployed for QRF duties at selected highly sensitive polling stations, in addition to the police force.

Corps Commander Karachi Lt. Gen. Babar Iftikhar informed the CM that army troops had been dispatched all over the province to serve as the third tier during the general elections.

The chief minister expressed his satisfaction with the election arrangements and mentioned that he had personally visited the divisional headquarters of the province to review the arrangements. The regional election commissioners present at the meeting also expressed their satisfaction with all the arrangements, including security ones. The CM pointed out that in November 2023 the situation of street crime was disturbed, on average 265 per day street crimes were reported, 15 Madadgar responses were slow, Police Vehicles were in dismal condition, and organized crime was unchecked.

At this the IG said that a dedicated motorcycle squad of 386 Motorcycles known as Shaheed Force has been established for spotting peak hours and hot spots. He added that Madadgar-15 has been revamped with the deployment of an additional 300 vehicles and 120 Motorbikes.

Efforts are in hand with Google and Apple through the European Emergency Number Association – EENA112 for exact locations for the provision of AML (Advance Mobile Location), Riffat Mukhtar disclosed. He added that a dedicated application would be launched by Feb 10 for dialling through Android and IOS App for exact locations.

30 New computer terminals and eight large screens have been added in the call centre for the visibility of force. The Call agents are trained twice by the University of Karachi on Empathy. Talking about Madadgar-15's achievements, the meeting was told that the Call Answering & Response Ratio increased from 92 to 98 per cent. Mobiles average response time reduced from 10 minutes to 6 minutes with the usage of vehicles' exact locations systems and deployment of additional vehicles and bikes.

Engagement with street criminals has been increased, the IG Police claimed and added that from Sep-23 to Jan-24 581 Encounters were made in which 71 criminals were killed, 615 criminals injured, 1,037 arrested red-handed. As a result, Street Crime has decreased by 4.19 per cent during 2023. IG Police said that per day average street crimes have decreased to 213- which means 19 per cent [decreased].

SHC CJ hopes internet service will be 'fine' after elections

KARACHI (INP): Sindh High Court (SHC) has adjourned hearing of petitions against repeated shut-downs and interruptions of internet service in the country till February 21 on absence of PTA's counsel.

The court on Tuesday ordered to maintain the stay order regarding uninterrupted internet service across the country. The court's order to continue the mobile internet service without interruption is also upheld. Chief Justice Sindh High Court Aqeel Ahmed Abbasi expressed his displeasure on the shutdown and interruption of internet service. "If our internet does not work, what will work elsewhere", Chief Justice remarked.

The Chief Justice also remarked that it seems internet to be fine after the election. An independent candidate from PS-110, Jibran Basir advocate filed a petition against the frequent shutdowns and interruptions of internet service.

NADRA extends office timings ahead of elections 2024

KARACHI (INP): The National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) has announced the immediate acquisition of Computerized National Identity Cards (CNICs) as general elections are around the corner, says in media reports.

According to details, NADRA has said that by giving normal, urgent or executive fees, the applicant can receive the ID card from NADRA offices during office

hours on February 6 and 7. Meanwhile, the working hours of all NADRA delivery centers across the country have been increased by three hours.

It should be noted that general elections will be held in the country on February 8, the last day of the election campaign for Election 2024 is today?

Meetings and other activities will be allowed until midnight. The Election Commission of Pakistan has completed the delivery of 260 million ballot papers to the ROs and DROs and representatives related to government press institutions on time despite the challenges.

Sindh information dept. sets up Election Cell

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Information Department on Tuesday, established an Election Cell to ensure provision of authentic and reliable information regarding the general elections 2024 to the journalists. The election cell headed by Director General Public Relations of Information Department government of Sindh will work from February 7 to 9, 2024, said a statement issued here. The cell will work continuously for three days for provision of authentic information to the journalists regarding the elections, it stated.

Preparations complete for general elections in Punjab: Ijaz Anwar

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Election Commissioner (PEC) Punjab Ijaz Anwar Chohan said on Tuesday that all preparations had been finalized for general elections in Punjab.

Speaking at a press conference, he said that printing of ballot papers had been completed and delivered to all district returning officers in the province.

He said that on February 7, the returning officers would ensure the receiving of election material, including ballot papers, by the presiding officers, besides polling stations' readiness.

He said that security, communication and transport plans had been chalked out for the elections, adding that police and army personnel would perform duties to maintain law and order at polling stations.

He emphasized the Election Commission's commitment to fulfilling its constitutional obligations, highlighting ongoing efforts to enhance the electoral process. Chohan commended Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja for his initiatives aimed at improving the electoral process and

ensuring the success of the 2024 general elections.

Acknowledging the support of the provincial caretaker government and governmental apparatus, Chohan noted consistent coordination with district returning officers, commissioners, and police officials since assuming offices.

He underscored the importance of regular communication, citing online meetings with key stakeholders, including the chief secretary and inspector general of police.

He said the Commission had set up a coherent system for monitoring, adding that election campaigns and preparations were being completely monitored under it. He said the complaints received through telephone, Whatsapp, and email were immediately resolved. Control rooms at federal, provincial, divisional, and district levels have been operational since the start of the election process, facilitating efficient management and response, he added.

He said that for the upcoming elections, the Election Management System (EMS) replaced RMS or RTS, offering

internet-independent functionality. Chohan outlined the deployment of 42 district monitoring officers and 600 teams tasked with enforcing the electoral code of conduct, with swift action taken against violations.

With 144 national and 297 provincial assembly constituencies in Punjab, encompassing 740.2 million registered voters, Chohan detailed the extensive infrastructure comprising 50,900 polling stations, 149,390 polling booths, and 524,070 polling staff. He underscored the distribution of polling stations based on sensitivity levels, with CCTV surveillance planned for highly sensitive polling stations.

Responding to inquiries, Chohan confirmed the formation of a committee to investigate the NA-127 incident, underscoring the commission's independence and commitment to ensuring a level playing field for all parties. He reiterated the commission's dedication to upholding the integrity of the electoral process and pledged to take strict action against any interference in ensuring peaceful general elections



LAHORE: Provincial Election Commissioner Punjab Ijaz Anwar Chohan addressing a press briefing in the Provincial Election Office. —APP Photo

Sindh police chalks out contingency plan for general elections

KARACHI (INP): The Sindh police have chalked out a contingency plan for the February 8 general elections, with 143,156 police personnel and volunteers deployed for security across the province.

According to a report submitted to Inspector-General of Police (IGP) Riffat Mukhtar Raja on Tuesday, a total of 14,052 polling buildings and 19,008 polling stations categorised as the most sensitive, sensitive and normal.

There were a total of 6,801 most sensitive, 6,550 sensitive and 5,657 normal polling stations, the report stated.

It said 143,156 police personnel and volunteers would be deployed for the

security of all polling stations, buildings and polling material across the province.

Out of a total of 143,156 policemen/volunteers, 95,400 would be deployed for security of polling stations, 10,648 personnel would be part of the "quick response force (QRA)" while 37,108 would be volunteers/private security guards who would perform security duty.

All is set for holding general elections in Pakistan, scheduled for February 8, 2024, with over 128 million male and female voters expected to exercise their voting rights.

According to Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), 5,121 candidates are in the race for the National

Assembly seats, of which 4,807 are males and 312 females. Two transgenders are also contesting the polls.

For the four provincial assemblies of Sindh, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), and Balochistan, a total of 12,695 candidates are contesting for the polls, out of which 12,123 are males and 570 are women.

There are a total of 128,585,760 registered voters in the country, out of which Punjab has the most, 73, 207,896. Sindh comes second with 26,994,769 registered voters while Khyber Pakhtunkhwa third with 21,928,119 voters. Balochistan has 5,371,947 registered voters while Pakistan's capital Islamabad has 1,083,029 voters.

Murtaza Wahab inspects KIHd's nursing school

KARACHI (APP): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab on Tuesday inspected the under-construction building of the Nursing School of Karachi Institute of Heart Diseases (KIHd) and issued on the spot instructions to the officers concerned.

While talking to media persons on the unscheduled visit to the Nursing school, the Mayor Karachi said that he will continue to work for the betterment of the city and its institutions. Municipal solar park is being developed in Kidney Hill Park, he added.

Municipal Commissioner S. M Afzal Zaidi, PPP, Deputy Parliamentary leader in the City Council Dil Muhammad and other officers were also present at the occasion. He said the citizens of Karachi need better and quality medical facilities.

DMOs continue actions

LAHORE (APP): The district monitoring officers (DMOs) on Tuesday continued actions over violations of code of conduct. According to a spokesperson of Provincial Election Commissioner Punjab Office, the DMO Nankana Sahib issued a warning to 6 candidates for displaying advertising material against the rules.

He said that the notices were also issued to Haji Mohammad Ilyas Khan, a candidate from PP-177 Kasur, for posting promotional material against the rules and Ghulam Rasool, a candidate from PP-178, for making provocative speech. The notices were also issued to Rana Abdul Rauf and Muhammad Sohail Khan, the candidates from PP-240 Bahawalnagar, and Rai Mushtaq, a candidate from PP-186 Okara, for holding rally without permission, he added.

Shehryar Ali Khan Khakwan, a candidate from PP-232 Vehari, was also issued notice for clarification by the DMO, he added.

Lahore administration issues traffic plan for General Elections 2024

LAHORE (INP): A comprehensive traffic plan has been devised for the upcoming general elections in Lahore, the capital of Punjab province. City Traffic Officer Amara Athar announced that on polling day, parking will be arranged at least 200 yards away from sensitive and busy roads leading to the polling stations.

District police and other law enforcement agencies will extend their full cooperation to ensure the peaceful conduct of the event.

In a statement, CTO Amara Athar highlighted that all officers, from constables to the CTO, will be present to assist and guide citizens. A total of 320 A-category and 1248 B-cate-

gory polling stations will be under duty, with supervision led by SPs Sohail Fazil, Shehzad Khan, and Malik Ikram.

Athar further detailed the deployment of resources, including 12 DSPs, 500 senior wardens, over 3,000 wardens, and 136 lady wardens who will collaborate with district police on polling day. Additionally, 20 tow trucks and 4 breakdown vehicles will be deployed in shifts to ensure smooth traffic management.

Today marks the conclusion of the election campaign for the general elections scheduled on February 8. The Election Commission has completed the delivery of ballot papers, and legal action

will be taken in case of violations. Over 26 crore ballot papers have been delivered, with the original ID card being mandatory for voting. Voting will also be permitted with expired ID cards.

The Election Commission spokesperson announced the closure of internet services at sensitive polling stations in Balochistan. Despite facing challenges such as adverse weather conditions, the commission successfully completed the ballot paper delivery process via land and air. Security, transportation, communication, and emergency plans at the provincial level are in place, ensuring a smooth electoral process.

The Plight of Islamabad Zoo: A Call for Change and Responsibility

Hayah Bahroni

The closure of the zoo in Islamabad, once a beacon of wonder and joy for many, marks a heartbreaking chapter in the city's history. What was once a place of fascination and education has descended into a state of neglect and tragedy, with animals suffering due to poor care and inadequate conditions.

As someone who treasured this facility in my youth, the recent events surrounding the zoo's mismanagement and exploitation by self-proclaimed saviors of animal rights are deeply troubling.

Growing up, the zoo held a special place in my heart. It was a sanctuary of discovery, where I could marvel at creatures from around the world and learn about the importance of wildlife conservation.

burning of a lion have shattered the image of this once-vibrant institution.

The transition from a well-maintained facility to a haven of neglect and exploitation was a result of the zoo falling into the hands of individuals who had little to no experience of handling the affairs but instead prioritized personal gain over the well-being of the creatures they are meant to protect. On the other hand, the so-called animal rights mafia had turned a blind eye to the suffering of the animals, perpetuating a cycle of cruelty and disregard for life.

And now after the closure of this facility they have used the situation to suit their own vested interests and are now looking to expand the influence even on the hiking trails. Unfortunately these people are only concerned for their own fringe benefits and have no pain or empathy for the poor animals.

It is imperative that sani-

ty prevails and responsible authorities step in to rectify the dire situation encircling the fiasco that led to the closure of the zoo. The Capital Development Authority must reclaim control of the zoo's administration and institute sweeping reforms to ensure that the facility upholds the highest standards of animal welfare, hygiene and care. It is not only a matter of justice for the voiceless inhabitants of the zoo but also a moral obligation to provide them with the dignity and respect they deserve.

By restoring the zoo to its former glory, the Capital Development Authority can create a space that not only serves as a source of entertainment and education for the public but also as a testament to our commitment to the well-being of all living beings. A properly managed zoo can become a symbol of hope and conservation, inspiring future generations to appreciate and protect the diverse species

that share our planet.

Reimagining the zoo as a modern, ethical institution will not only benefit the animals but also enrich the lives of visitors who seek to connect with nature in a meaningful way. It is a chance to bridge the gap between the digital world, where animals are often reduced to mere images on screens and the tangible reality of witnessing these majestic creatures up close.

The closure of the zoo in Islamabad due to the appalling conditions in which the animals were kept is a wake-up call for us all. It is a reminder of our responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all creatures and to ensure that places like zoos serve as centers of conservation and education. Let us hope that the Capital Development Authority heeds this call for change, turning the fate of the zoo around and creating a legacy that we can be proud to pass on to the next generation.

LESCO officer passes away

LAHORE (APP): LESCO (Lahore Electric Supply Company) Cycling Team Assistant Manager Mumtaz Riaz has passed away due to cardiac arrest, the LESCO spokesman confirmed this to the media here Tuesday.

A large number of LESCO officers and employees participated in the funeral prayer. The LESCO Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Engineer Shahid Haider has expressed deep sorrow over the sad demise of Mumtaz Riaz, and said that Mumtaz Riaz's services to the company would be remembered forever. He also prayed that may Allah Almighty rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant courage to the bereaved family to bear this irreparable loss with patience.

The spokesman mentioned that Mumtaz Riaz was also the Assistant Manager of WAPDA Cycling Team.

Pakistan's first E-Rozgar center inaugurated

ISLAMABAD (INP): The caretaker Information Technology (IT) Minister, Umar Saif, on Tuesday inaugurated Pakistan's first E-Rozgar center in Islamabad.

During the inauguration ceremony, the IT minister, Umar Saif, stated that the E-Rozgar center boasts around 100 workstations fully equipped with state-of-the-art facilities tailored for freelancers, with plans to expand to 300 workstations in the future.

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Over 21.982m voters to exercise right of franchise in KP on February 8

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: As many as over 21.982 million registered voters would exercise right of franchise during free and transparent election in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on February 08, 2024.

These voters include over 11.944 million male and 9.983 million female registered voters for whom 15,696 polling stations were setup. Shamshad Khan, Provincial Election Commissioner told media persons that all arrangements for free, fair and transparent election were completed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 45,5400

million ballot papers were handed over to the respective returning officers.

He said that 164,000 staff were trained and deployed at their respective polling stations in 36 districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Shamshad said that polling would start at 8am and would continue till 5pm without break on February 8. He said that polling would be held in 44 national assembly seats and 113 in provincial assembly seats in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Polling on NA 8, PK 22 Bajaur and PK 91 Kohat were postponed due to death of candidates. He said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

police, Frontier Corps, Frontier Constabulary and Pakistan Army would assist Election Commission of Pakistan regarding provision of security at polling stations. He said election campaign would end at 12pm mid night today.

Shamshad said that signatures of polling agents would also be taken on Form 45 and results would be transmitted to Returning Officers and ECP through EMS online. He said casting of votes was a national obligation and urged voters to come out of homes in large number and exercise their right of franchise in a free atmosphere.



PESHAWAR: KP Caretaker Minister for Information Barrester Feroze Jamal Shah Kaka Khel during his visit to the mausoleum of Hazrat Kaka Sahib.

DSJ inspects sub jail

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: District and Sessions Judge (D&SJ) Nowshera Muhammad Asif Khan along with Senior Civil Judge Admin Nowshera Shehzad Ali Khan and Senior Civil Judge Judicial Faiza Gul besides judicial magistrates including Sahar Saeed, Noreen Farooq, Pawan Waheed Awan, Sania Kiran, Neelam Ibrahim and Sahar Raana paid a special visit to Sub Jail Nowshera. The judges made a detailed inspection of all the barracks, library, warrant cell, washroom and other parts of the jail and found the sanitation condition satisfactory.

On this occasion various registers of the jail were checked and all the entries were found to be correct. The judges also interviewed the prisoners to listen to their complaints however no prisoner made any complaint against the prison staff. The District and Sessions Judge also checked the quality of medical facilities and food in the jail and found it to be standard. The IT officials of the District Judiciary accompanied by the District Judge checked the video link facility in the jail which was found to be correct.

District and Sessions Judge Muhammad Asif Khan directed the civil judges to visit the jail on special days as well as weekly basis. On this occasion, some prisoners also made requests regarding their personal problems, on which the District and Sessions Judge issued necessary orders on the spot. Meanwhile, Additional District and Sessions Judge Nowshera Muhammad Asif Jadoon and Judicial Magistrate Nowshera Muhammad Farooq Khan also held camp courts in which 14 minor cases were disposed.

Cold weather predicted

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Regional Meteorological Center Peshawar on Monday predicted that cold and dry weather is expected over most districts of the province, while very cold and partly cloudy in upper districts.

During the last 24 hours, cold and dry weather prevailed over most districts of the province. Rainfall recorded at different stations of KP was nil.

The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in centigrade at different stations of KP were Peshawar 19/05, Chitral 11/-01, Timergara 18/02, Dir 14/-02, Mirkhani 13/-02, Kalam 08/-14, Droshe 10/-01, Saidu Sharif 15/00, Pattan 13/03, Malam Jabba 05/-05, Takht Bhai 19/03, Kakul 11/00, Balakot 16/01, Parachinar 12/-03, Bannu 19/05, Cherat 12/03, DI Khan City 20/07.

PK 55 a nursery for political workers

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Constituency PK 55 comprised of Tehsil Rustam whose mountain ranges are connected to the districts of Buner and Swabi. It is also beautiful and rich in natural resources is precious minerals. The old name of constituency PK 55 Mardan is constituency PK 49. The total population of this constituency is: 3 lakh 38 thousand 650 while the number of registered voters is 2 lakh 7 thousand 922, in which male voters are 1 lakh 13 thousand 45 and women voters are 94 thousand 8 hundred and 77.

The number of polling stations is 146 including 49 per mile, 43 and 54 combined polling stations. The important areas of the constituency include Rustam, Sawaldher, Bakhshali, Gujrat, Paludheri, Chargli, Machi, Bazar and other areas if we talk about politics, all the political parties have fielded their candidates for the February 8 elections. Some are also trying their luck as freelancers however the real contest here will be between the candidates of JUI, ANP and PTI.

This constituency was considered the stronghold of PPP in the past then the wind of Tehreek-e-Insaf blew, the goddess of for-

tune was kind to Tufail Anjum twice so this time the situation has completely changed.

Tehreek-e-Insaf the people of the constituency are unhappy with Tufail Anjum, who are in conflict with each other despite nine years of power, the people of the constituency still have issues of clean drinking water, electricity, gas, health and employment problems, has given ticket to its long-time worker Sohail Bacha in this constituency.

Sohail Bacha is basically an ideological worker of the party and the party has given him a ticket, but Sohail Bacha is facing many problems that he will get the ideological votes of the party but will lose the votes of other common voters and communities. There are several reasons for this, but the first and major reason is that until the last moment, Bacha himself was not sure that the party had really nominated him for the election or stood him up for the seat because at the last moment Until now, seat-to-seat adjustment talks were going on between JUI and ANP and this seat of PK-55 was also one of them which was set aside for Kuch Lo Do. Now the negotiations between the two parties were not successful, so Sohail Bacha

had to bring a cloud to the field unwillingly.

JUI's candidate Adnan Khan's position is stable and he has a clear lead over his rival candidates. Adnan Khan is the candidate of a popular and strong party like JUI; this party has enough vote bank in this constituency. Adnan Khan is the son of Senator Haji Dilawar Khan from the streets. Electricity transformers etc. from building mosques and madrassas to schools and the poor have kept their resources open. They are running their own election campaign for Adnan Khan.

In this area of Center Haji Dilawar Khan, there are personal and close ceremonies from all parties and communities, so Adnan Khan will also benefit directly from this. Adnan Khan is aware of all the problems of his constituency and has a comprehensive plan to solve the problems and give employment to the youth.

The manner in which the election campaign is being conducted by this young candidate has also made the opposition parties angry. Keeping all these facts in mind, political analysts are of the opinion that JUI candidate Adnan Khan will win this seat with a big margin on February 8.



PESHAWAR: President of Anjuman-e-Farooqia Parachinar Munir Bangash addressing a press conference.

CS, IGP inspect polling arrangements in Haripur

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: To ensure peaceful conduct of general election, the Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry and IGP, Akhtar Hayat Gandapur paid a visit to Haripur district.

On the occasion DPO Haripur, Muhammad Umar Khan, DC Haripur, Khan Muhammad, SP Investigation Haripur, Amjad Hussain and district officers were present on the occasion, said an official press release. DPO

Haripur Muhammad Umar Khan gave a detailed briefing to the CS and IGP on the security arrangements for the general election.

The Chief Secretary and IGP paid a visit to the polling station established at Post Graduate College Haripur and inspected the security arrangements. The Chief Secretary directed the district administration to ensure a peaceful atmosphere and conduct of free, fair and transparent polling on the election day. He also issued directives for provision of drinking water, washrooms and

other needed facilities to the people on the polling day.

The Inspector General of Police KP directed the police officers to ensure implementation of code of conduct issued by the Election Commission in letter and spirit. He said no unauthorized person should be allowed to enter polling stations while discipline among voters and their body search must also be ensured. The IGP also directed the police force to safe shifting of the polling material and staff to the polling stations.

Section-144 imposed

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In the wake of apprehensions of mischief from unscrupulous elements with the aim to disrupt the peaceful atmosphere of the district and create situation detrimental to public security and in the light of ECP instruction regarding maintaining a code of conduct, the Deputy Commissioner has imposed Section-144 Cr. P. C. in the district.

A notification to this effect said on Monday that display and brandishing of firearms in the run up to the election, on election day and post-election period will remain completely banned.

The order said carrying or possessing mobile phones inside the premises of polling stations, except presiding officers, will not be allowed. The entry of male into female polling booths on election day will also be banned. Standing on rooftops of polling stations and other buildings near the polling stations except the deployed staff of the LEAs will remain banned on the election day and on 7th and 8th February.

It said that presence of persons not residents of the village and neighborhood council within a radius of the 400 meters of the vicinity of the polling stations will be strictly banned. The use of loudspeakers other than those authorized by the ECP Code of Conduct will not be allowed and a complete ban on mobilization of all equipment used for developmental purposes like electric poles, gas pipes and construction material will remain imposed.

The notification said the order will remain enforced for a period of 15 days with immediate effect unless withdrawn or modified. Any person contravening the order shall render himself or herself whatever the case may be liable to punishment under Section 188 PPC. It said that army, police, scouts and Dri Levies personnel will remain exempted from the order for security purposes only.

Power to remain suspended

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) on Tuesday notified that due to maintenance work power supply will remain suspended from Mansehra grid station on 7th and 10th February from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. resultantly, consumers of Shinkari feeders will face inconvenience.

Likewise, it said that power supply will remain suspended from Besham Grid Station on 10th and 13th February from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. resultantly, consumers of Besham 2 and 33 KV Pattan and Tehkal grid connected feeders will face inconvenience. The power supply will also remain suspended from Mingora Grid Station on 10th and 13th February from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. resultantly, consumers of Malam Jabba, Express Saidu Hospital, Bandai, Mingora 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, Kabal, Nawa Kali, Saidu Sharif, Barikot 2, Odigram, Khabal 4, Matta 2, Faiza Ghat, Kabal 2, Gulda, Margharza, Saidu Hospital, Kabal 3, Gogdara, Takhta Band, Qambar, Singar, MES, Haji Baba, Shin, Saidu Baba, Bara Bandai, Shah Dara, Hospital Express feeders will face inconvenience.

Vote to decide fate of nation: Sherpao

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: As the political arena heats up in the run-up to the general election slated for February 8, Quami Watan Party (QWP) Chairman Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao on Tuesday urged the people to vote for the candidates of those political parties that had the ability to steer the country out of the prevailing challenges.

Wrapping up his party's election campaign by addressing a well-attended gathering at his village Sherpao in Charsadda, he said the nation should reject the ones, who ruined the country through their misrule. "People should vote wisely to elect the party and the candidate who can work for the betterment of the people."

This is an election between those who destroyed the country and those who want to put it back on its feet. Before voting, the people should remember the perpetrators of May 9 mayhem, which cannot be forgotten by the nation," he urged the people. He remarked that

Imran Khan believed in the rule or ruin philosophy, which led to the attacks on the military installations.

Paying homage to his elder brother Hayat Mohammad Khan Sherpao Shaheed on his 49th death anniversary, the veteran politician said he sacrificed his life striving for the wellbeing of the people from downtrodden segments of the society. "The people still remember him for his hard work and struggle against the forces of the status quo," he recalled.

Holding the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf responsible for the problems facing the country, Aftab Sherpao said the PTI rule ruined the country and caused political instability. He said the PTI disillusioned the youth and deceived them through hollow slogans.

He maintained the slogan of so-called change was a ploy to reach the corridors of power. "Imran Khan acted like a dictator. His government failed to develop a working relationship with the opposition in the National Assembly," he recalled, adding that it

would take considerable time and effort to undo the damage done to the country. He said the people should vote for those candidates, who had the ability to revive the economy, create jobs and fight poverty. "Imran Khan even did not spare his benefactors and stabbed them in the back," he said, adding the PTI promoted intolerance and ridiculed its opponents.

Aftab Sherpao said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa suffered the most during the PTI rule in the province. He said KP lagged behind in all sectors and was now buried under huge loan. He said KP's debt had soared to over Rs1,000 billion, rendering the province cash-strapped.

He said the nation was faced with unprecedented poverty, price-hike and unemployment. The QWP leader said after the election the political parties should to join hands to work for the betterment of the country by taking along everyone. "Pakistan cannot afford political polarization. We need unity to address the challenges," he said.

People urged to judiciously exercise right to vote

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Muhammad Faiq Shah, founder and chairman of the Amun Taraqqi Party urged the people to judiciously exercise their democratic right to vote on February 8. Shah asked the government and Election Commission of Pakistan to take pragmatic steps to maintain law and order during Election Day, besides holding of the transparent polls.

The ATP chairman said February 8 would be the "day of salvation" for the nation as "anti-people parties" would fall flat on their faces. The party leader said dynastic politics is detrimental for the nation and the country, which would be buried with the power of people's vote on Feb 8. Two families ruled [Pakistan] seven times, but instead of

progressing, the country went backwards by decades," Mr Shah claimed while addressing different public meetings and workers in district Charsadda, Mardan Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tuesday.

The ATP chief pointed out that currently, around 110 million people in the country were forced to live below the poverty line. He added that these "incompetent" people were responsible for the country's uncertain economic and political situation. Faiq commented on ATP manifesto, stating that his party is the best solution and ideological alternative force for young people.

He stressed that the vote should be given to the manifesto and program when people will be empowered then the country will progress and issues would

be resolved. In this regard, he asserted the election commission and other relevant institutions needed to play their role. How long will be given loans on heavy interest by mortgaging the national assets?

He emphasized it is imperative to promote industries, agriculture, trade and businesses to put the feeble county's economy on the right track. Shah called for making Pakistan a financially self-reliant nation by focusing on indigenous resources. The ATP chief said it is essential to provide opportunities to youth to play their role in national progress. Faiq asked voters to judge the present and past of rulers and politicians before going into casting vote on the Election Day and bury the hereditary politics forever.

Annual Science and Arts Exhibition program held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A local school organized Annual Science and Arts Exhibition Program 2024 here on Tuesday with a large number of students, teachers and parents attending. The ceremony was started with the recitation from the Holy Quran by Nouman Khan, followed by the National Anthem.

The program was inaugurated by chief guest Director Syed Daud Bukhari. The parents of the children also participated in this program in which various models and objects of science and arts were presented. In this program, the students of different classes made and presented different models of science and arts, which were greatly appreciated by the parents, teachers, principal and director and appreciated that if our school children would do research and experiments in science and

arts in the same way. "If the students give good time to research oriented studies, they could play a major role in the country's progress. In this program, students wore different types of colorful regional clothes by depicting the actual picture of the country. "This is proof that even today we are maintaining our culture and customs," Director Syed Daud Bukhari.

Education is the only jewel through which we can be counted among the developed countries of the whole world after research and experience. "If our beloved country Pakistan and all its educational institutions continue to observe, investigate and experiment, one day, God willing. We will also be among the best and developed countries in the world. At the end of the program, school director Dr. Syed Daud Bukhari and principal Maimoona Rauf

gave awards to the students who showed the best performance in scientific modeling. Director Syed Daud Bukhari spoke very beautifully on the occasion of this program that education is the guarantee of development for any nation or society that education is the basic need of every human being.

"No matter how much the times progress, but the importance of education is immutable in its place," Mr Bukhari said. A good society can be formed due to moral education, teachers are very important to achieve education, which helps children to achieve higher education, he added. An excellent educational environment has spirited teachers without whom education cannot be imagined and moreover without education we cannot even think of development, the teachers said while speaking.

Bilawal a hope of people: Abid

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Member of Pakistan People's Party Provincial Council Alhaj Abid Ali said that the sun of February 8 will rise with the success of Pakistan People's Party. Bilawal Bhutto is the hope of the people of Pakistan, he is the last choice for the prosperity of Pakistan. In one of his newspaper statements, he said that the government formed under the leadership of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will make Pakistan prosperous and show it as one of the most powerful

countries in the world.

He said that after coming to power, the government of Pakistan People's Party will firstly control inflation and reduce the prices of electricity, gas and petrol and will take effective measures to reduce the value of the dollar so that the poor class can benefit as much as possible.

He said that Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has breathed a new spirit in the Pakistan People's Party and he has become a beloved leader of the workers and people.

He said that Bilawal Bhutto

Zardari has not only strengthened the party by the political activities, but the message of the party is also reaching home. He said that the time has come that Bilawal Bhutto Zardari shall take the reins of this country and take over the control and leadership of this nation.

He said that the leadership of Pakistan People's Party always brought the country out of crises in difficult times. Benazeer Bhutto is still living in the hearts of people and Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will fulfill her mission.



In brief

Flagship March conducted
F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: In order to establish law and order in the country ahead of general elections 2024, a joint flag-ship march organized by Pakistan army troops along with local police personnel, on Tuesday. The flag march was led by District Police Officer (DPO) Toba Tek Singh Ibadit Nisar and Deputy Commissioner Toba Tek Singh Naeem Sindhu, besides SP Investigation Toba Zafar Abbas, ASP Sadar, Muhammad Fahim, DSP Traffic Asif Rahim Butt, SH. Including SHOs Circle Toba, Dolphin Squad, Traffic Police, Elite Police Force, Patrolling Police, Pakistan Army soldiers and vehicles also participated. On this occasion, DPO Toba Ibadit Nisar said that the purpose of the joint flag march of police and army is to create a sense of security among the people. Our activity also conveys the impression that Pakistan Army and District Police Toba Tek Singh are always ready to deal with any miscreants and provide all possible help to the people on the occasion of general elections 2024. Similarly, in Gujra, DSP Aftab Ahmed, ASP Sundus Ishaq in Kamalia and Police flag march was conducted in Pir Mahal under the leadership of DSP Malik Zafar Iqbal.

Two drug pushers held

QUETTA (INP): The Anti Narcotics Force (ANF) seized cache of drugs and arrested two drug peddlers during separate actions in different areas of the province. A spokesman of ANF said on Tuesday that teams of the force during crackdowns in different areas of Chaghi seized 259 kilogram opium and 7 kilogram hashish. In another raid near suburbs Lakpas, two drug pushers were apprehended with 65 kilogram hashish and 8 kilogram Ice (Crystal Meth). Separate cases were registered against the detainees under Drug Act and further investigations were underway.

Retired FC man kills colleague
F.P. Report

JAMRUD: A retired personnel of Frontier Constabulary (FC) shot dead his FC colleague and later shot himself dead with the same pistol in Shahkass area in Jamrud tehsil of Khyber district on Tuesday. Police said a verbal clash between a retired FC personnel, named Zulfano and another FC man led to the unfortunate incident. Police said during the clash, Zulfano shot dead the FC man and later committed suicide with the same weapon. Police said the incident took place in Mastalkhel area of Shahkass. Bodies of both were shifted to hospital for medico-legal procedure, police said adding that an investigation has been started into the incident.

Kashmiris struggle hailed

MUZAFFARABAD (INP): Central leader of Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and former minister for tourism and transport, Muhammad Tahir Khokhar has said that his party stands with Kashmiri people and salute their struggle for freedom and right to self determination. In a statement issued on Tuesday, he said that the fourth generation of Kashmiris was standing firm against the Indian atrocities and even today the oppressed Kashmiris were raising voice for their right. He said Pakistan will stand with the people of Kashmir until they get the right to self-determination.

Policeman laid to rest with honour

F.P. Report

BUNER: The funeral prayer of police constable Fazal Raziq was offered at police line Daggar on Tuesday. Regional Police Officer Malakand, District Police Officer and Deputy Commissioner Buner along with large number of policemen were present during the funeral prayer.

According to details, the body was buried in the native area of Nagari Buner. The martyr was buried with full official honors at native village in Nagrai. The martyr was saluted by the armed police force and honored. The firing incident took place at Ambela check post at mid night on Tuesday when the constables tried to stop a stolen car.

The rider opened fire as a result constable Fazal Raziq killed on spot while constable Abdur Rashed crushed to injury by the riders. The car lifter leave the car and escapes in the escorted car taking advan-



tage of darkness. Police confirmed the incident. According to the police spokesman, police tried to stop the stolen vehicle on the information, the car lifters opened fire, which killed constable Fazal Raziq injured constable Abdur Rasheed. The body of the martyred and injured police and the injured were shifted to a nearby hospital.

According to details, the lifters were taking a car from Chanar tehsil Gagra district Buner, when the car lifting cell received the

information, the information passed to check post Ambela to stop the car but the lifters instead opened firing which killed constable Fazal Raziq and another policeman Abdur tool ashed crushed to injuries.

According to the police, the lifters left the stolen car and fled to the side of Rustam Mardan in another vehicle. The police have taken the stolen vehicle into custody and registered a case and started investigation and claimed that the accused will be traced and arrested soon.

785 lady health workers deployed for security duties

F.P. Report

SHAHADKOT: Lack of lady police officers in Qamber Shahdadkot district of Sindh. In connection with the general elections, the district administration has assigned the duty of 785 lady health workers for security arrangements. Due to the lack of lady police personnel, 785 lady health workers posted in the health department have been entrusted with the security arrangements at the polling stations who will protect the women from all kinds of trouble after searching the polling stations.

During the election duty, all lady health workers across the district will not be paid any compensation for performing duties. A security plan has been prepared while no compensation will be paid to lady health workers for doing unpaid duty, while a total of

598 polling stations for 2 National Assembly seats NA-196 and NA-197 and 4 Provincial Assembly seats of the district.

However, with the support of the health department, 785 lady health workers have been assigned security guard duties without compensation. But duties have been assigned with male police officers because lady health workers have been assigned duties to take over the security arrangements for women's polling on election day. The security guard duties have been handed over, while according to the sources, all the lady health workers of Qamber Shahdadkot district have been announced to protest for non-payment of remuneration for doing election duty.

On the other hand, last day, the heirs of law student Ali Jan Chandio were

arrested and disappeared at the hands of plainclothes officers, and the protest was repeated on the Larkana-Kamber bypass and the traffic was blocked by burning tires on this occasion. The heirs of the arrested youth, father Riaz Chandio and others said that our young man is getting his law degree in Jamshoro educational institution, but plainclothes officers have arrested Ali Jan without any reason and disappeared, which worries us all. We have no connection with any political or religious parties, but the arrest was not reported at any police station in the district, so we have suspicions that an attempt is being made to kill the talkative youth, he appealed to Home Minister Sindh. An appeal has been made for the recovery of the youth.

First ever Thalassemia Center, blood bank inaugurated

F.P. Report

SUJAWAL: The first ever Thalassemia Center and Blood bank in the Sujawal district was jointly inaugurated by Deputy Commissioner Sujawal Wajid Sheikh, District Health Officer Dr. Hanif Ahmed Memon and Muhammad Iqbal, founder of Kashif Iqbal Thalassemia Center Karachi and Aslam Memon on Tuesday.

The inauguration ceremony was followed by an event that highlighted the aim of opening the center. DHO Sujawal Dr. Hanif Memon said that: As soon as he assumed charge of District Health Officer Sujawal establishing Thalassemia Center was one of his prime objectives and finally he had achieved it with the collaboration of

Muhammad Iqbal a notable philanthropist who had been managing 28 Thalassemia Centers across the country.

DHO thanked civil society and donors of Sujawal district who made it possible. Recipient of Pride of Performance award Muhammad Iqbal founder of Kashif Iqbal Thalassemia Center Karachi said that: Death of his 16 years old son at the hands of Thalassemia persuaded him to work for cure and prevention of the life-taking disease.

"I have been working to prevent this disease and ease up things for those who are putting up with this troublesome diseases"; he mentioned and added that blood transfusion was an expensive process and is beyond the reach of poor patients. Hence this center

would facilitate poor patients. He urged well-to-do citizens to assist him and the district health department manage the affairs of Thalassemia Center and blood bank. District Commissioner Sujawal Abdul Wajid Sheikh said that the coordination between local citizens and the government institutions would put our society on the path of development and this initiative was one such example. He vowed to cooperate with health department and the donors for smooth maintenance of center.

Nisar Memon told the audience that a committee comprising notable citizens of Sujawal District had been formed to manage the affairs of center and extending collaboration for enhancing the facilities.

Over 4000 cops to guard most sensitive polling stations in Dir

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The district administration here on Tuesday announced its control and monitoring rooms for all concerned in the district. Talking to local journalists at Timergara an official said that a total of 4274 policemen and 500 personnel of the Dir Levis would perform security duties.

He said that a district monitoring control room had been set up at the deputy commissioner office which would remain functional till the end of Feb 9. Similar control rooms had been set up in the offices of all the seven returning officers. Deputy Commissioner Wasil Khan meanwhile visited the technical college Khaima and examined the packing and dispatching of election materials.

Meanwhile the regional police officer Malakand range Muhammad Ali Khan along with district police officer Ziaud Din and other officials visited different polling stations in Ouch and Chakdara. The RPO checked the security arrangements at the most sensitive polling stations,

their boundary walls, CCTV cameras, entry and exit points and directed the police officers to remain vigilant on polls' day.

The total population of Lower Dir district is 16,60,528 including 817545 men, 842927 women and 26 transgender persons. The number of registered voters in the district is 870,852 including 481,409 men and 389,043 women. The district has two national and five provincial assembly constituencies. In NA 6 Lower Dir-I the number of registered voters is 457,075 including 253,972 male and 203,103 female. In NA 7 Lower Dir-II the number of registered voters is 413,777 including 227,837 male and 185,940 female.

The DC also imposed section 144 on any kind of aerial firing, taking of mobile phones inside a polling station, entry of men in polling stations or polling booths for women and standing on tops of houses near to any polling station in the district.

Rah e Haq Party candidate in NA 7 withdraws in favour of JI nominee Maulana Ismail: The Pakistan Rah e Haq Party candidate for NA 7 and party dis-

trict president of Lower Dir Maulana Ubaidullah Anwar on Tuesday announced withdraw from the running and support the Jamaat-i-Islami nominee for NA 7 Maulana Muhammad Ismail and PK 15 candidate Azizullah Khan. He made the announcement during a press conference at the Chakdara press club. The JI nominees Maulana Muhammad Ismail and Azizullah Khan along with other political activists were also in attendance.

Speaking on the occasion the PRHP nominee Maulana Ubaidullah Anwar said that he had decided to withdraw in favour of the JI candidate Maulana Muhammad Ismail unconditionally. He said that both the JI and PRHP had similar ideologies and they both struggled to defend the 'khatm e Nabowat' and 'nammos e Sahaba'. He said the JI lawmakers would not disappoint the PRHP workers in the parliament. He said the JI had presented the 'nammos e Sahaba' bill in the national assembly for which the PRHP decided to support its candidates in Lower Dir. He said the

JI has withdrawn its candidate for PK 81 in favour of the PRHP chief Ibrahim Qasami and in return he had withdrawn in favour of the JI candidates in Lower Dir.

The JI candidate for NA 7 Maulana Ismail thanked the PRHP nominee and its workers and said that he would never disappoint them. The JI local leaders on Tuesday announced plans to launch a skills' development programme for youth in the district. Speaking at a news conference at the Timergara press club the JI tehsil chief Malik Sher Bahadar, Fahimud Din, Inayatullah, Arshad Khan and others said the voters should vote for their party for ending corruption, price hike, lawlessness and unemployment. They said the previous rulers had looted the country by transferring national wealth abroad. They said the JI would never disappoint the masses after coming into power. They said the JI could only steer the country out of crises.

Meanwhile the Pakistan Tahreek Insaf former tehsil president Malik Fawad Ahmad announced to quit his party and

join the Pakistan Tahreek Insaf Parliamentary (PTI-P) along with dozens of his relatives and supporters. He made the announcement during a press conference at the Timergara press club in the presence of PTI-P candidate for PK 17 and former provincial minister Muzafar Said.

The PTI former tehsil president said that he was parting his ways with the PTI after serving it for 17 years. He said that his supporters and relatives would also support the PTI-P candidate in PK 17. He said that he had made the decision in the best interest of the area and local people. Retired principal Nisar Ahmad, district leader of Insaf Students' Federation Wasim Khan, Tehsinullah and others also announced to join the PTI-P.

Speaking on the occasion the PTI-P candidate for PK 17 Muzafar Said was of the view that his party would form the next government in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He said that peace, prosperity and development were the slogans of his party and he would try his best to initiate mega development proj-

ects in Dir after coming into power.

Poetry book launched: A poetry book 'kawish' written by a female student Mehak Tajik in Urdu was formally launched during a function held at a local hotel in Timergara here the other day. The Tanzeem Asateza Pakistan former president and grandfather of the poetess Syed Jehan Badshah was chief guest on the occasion.

The central chairman of Tajik Milli Ittihad Ihsan Tajik, Javed Akhtar advocate, Saeed Ahmad advocate, former provincial president of All Pakistan Clerks' Association Muhammad Shaer Tajik, poets Iqbal Hussain Salar, Muslim Khan Wisal, Habib Ahmad and others appreciated the young poetess Mehak Tajik and said that very few poets express themselves in the national language. They said the poetess had done a great job and her book would add valuable work to Urdu literature. The speakers asked youths to focus on book reading instead of wasting time on smartphones and social media. The guests also awarded prizes to the young poetess.



HYDERABAD: A convoy of security personnel patrolling in city ahead of upcoming general elections.

PTI-P involves in print of fake ballot papers: Ikhtiyar

Syed Waliullah Shah

NEWSHERA: Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) PK 88 and NA 33 candidate Ikhtiyar Wali Khan blamed Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI-P) had printed fabricated ballot papers for manipulation of general elections.

PML-N candidate claimed that PTI-P chairperson and former Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Parvez Khattak had initiated the irregular and malpractice to rig the upcoming election. Ikhtiyar Wali added that he had filed written complaint before Election Commission of Pakistan in this regard.

PML-N candidate argued Election Commission of Pakistan along with local administration to act against unconstitutional and illegal practices for manipulation of elections otherwise the upcoming polls will raise serious questions about of fairness.

Rescue 1122, Khyber finalizes plan
F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: On the eve of general election an emergency action plan has been formulated by the Rescue 1122, Khyber here on the last day. An extra-ordinary meeting of the officials, chaired by district emergency officer Syed Shoab Mansoor was held in Rescue 122 district headquarters, Jamrud that was attended by emergency officer Engineer Baryal Mukhtar, control room station house officer besides other workers.

Vacations of all officials were cancelled and their presences on duties were ensured on 08 February 2024. Keeping in view the sensitive status of scores of polling stations in Khyber, volunteers of Rescue 1122 would be on high alert to respond in any untoward incident; Mr Mansoor added and said the officials had been directed for provision of all necessary facilities including equipment and medicines in operational vehicles.

JI to bring peaceful revolution: Mushtaq

F.P. Report

BUNER: Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) PK 25 held a big election rally at Gudizai Ground in which large number of workers were present. They raised loud slogans of Islamic revolution in the election rally.

Senator Mushtaq Ahmed Khan Muhammad Haleem Bacha Abbas Shaheen Abdul Ghaffar Alam Khan Aminur Rasheed Imaduddin spoke. In their address to the election rally, Mushtaq Ahmed Khan and other speakers claimed the victory of Jamaat-e-Islami in the February 8 elections and pointed out to the gathering that the world Muslims and especially young people have woken up to defend the rituals of Islam throughout the country and through voting, the tyranny of the American civilization and the tyrannical rulers will be held accountable and the release of Aafia, the freedom of Palestine and inflation from the country, unemployment, lawlessness and injustice will be abolished and recruitment on merit and justice in courts School,

College, University, education, employment and self-respect will be provided for the support of the poor laborers, farmers and widow orphans, and by bringing the resources of Pakistan to work, the people will be provided and to bring Islamic revolution.

The speakers claimed development, prosperity and peace will be guaranteed and the name of Pakistan will be enlightened in the world. He gave a message to the participants and Muslims and especially the youth that the ruling parties have not been working for the survival, integrity, development, prosperity and peace of this country.

And the successive rulers did not play any role. They assured that Jamaat-e-Islami will do all this and appealed to vote the scales to Jamaat Islami candidates Bakht Jahan Khan Muhammad Halim Bacha Engineer Nasir Ali and Raj Wali Khan in the elections and make sure their victory and not vote for Azad candidates and to stop the way of buying and selling votes rather cost

your vote for the righteous leadership of Jamaat-e-Islami and play your role for Islam and Pakistan and become loyal to Almighty Allah.

Meanwhile, like the rest of the country, Buner district also celebrated February 5 as Kashmir Solidarity Day. On the occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day, a joint walk was organized by Assistant Commissioner Mandannar and TMA Mandannar on February 5, led by Asst. Commissioner Madam Maryam Bakhtawar.

Officers of other departments, students and members of civil societies participated. The participants of the walk raised slogans against the ongoing Indian oppression and violation of human rights by the occupying forces in Occupied Kashmir. The speakers said that now India can no longer subjugate Kashmiris on the basis of force, freedom is the right of Kashmiris which India has to give. Finally, prayers were also offered for the freedom of Kashmir and the integrity of the country.

Political workers to support JUI-F candidate in Chitral

F.P. Report

CHITRAL: Members of other parties, including Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in favor of Senator Mohammad Talha Mahmood, nominated for the National Assembly from NA 1 Chitral, also announced their support. Sarah Shah and Syed Latifa Shah, a very active female member of PTI, from Upper Chitral district, also announced to join the convoy of Senator Talha Mahmood. Syeda Latifa Shah was also contesting election for PK 1 as independent candidate for the provincial assembly who had already started the election campaign but she withdrawn.

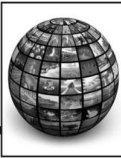
Addressing a press conference at District Headquarters Booni district of Upper Chitral district that we were really impressed from humanitarian services

of Senator Mohammad Talha Mahmood, who was also chairman of Talha Mahmood Foundation. He continues to help the poor, affected and the needy people not only in Chitral but in whole country including foreign countries. He do welfare and rehabilitation work in all the four provinces of Pakistan as well as in other poor countries too. As a donor, it is hoped that he will not waste or embezzle our right if elected MNA from Chitral. Syed Latifa Shah withdrew in favor of the provincial assembly candidate as a solidarity with Talha Mahmood.

Apart from this, people from Pakistan Peoples Party, Jamaat -e -Islami, Muslim League N and other parties are also joining the convoy of Senator Mohammad Talha Mahmood. In Reich, Khot, Shah Gram and other areas,

of upper Chitral people are affiliated with other political and religious groups, also left their parties and joined Talha Mahmood party who impressed from the spirit of his serving for humanity.

At Garam Chishma, Sub Retired Amirullah, Qari Nizamuddin, Rahat Ali Shah from Pakistan Tehreek -e -Insaf and a large number of councilors who belonged to different political parties, announced to left their parties in favor of Senator Mohammad Talha Mahmood. Speaking on the occasion, some people of Lutkoh said that Saleem Khan, who elected member of the Provincial Assembly twice on the Pakistan People's Party ticket and had been a provincial minister for five years. He was a very poor man but after becoming a minister, he became a millionaire but the roads in our area are still looking like ruins.



Senegal on the brink after elections postponed

DAKAR (BBC): Senegal's reputation as a bastion of democracy in an unstable region is on the line as protesters clash with police outside the National Assembly. Inside, lawmakers have passed a contentious bill to extend President Macky Sall's tenure and delay elections after he called off a planned election with just three weeks to go.

Khalifa Sall, a leading opponent and a former mayor of Dakar, who is not related to the president, called the delay a "constitutional coup" and urged people to protest against it. His political coalition has vowed to go to court. Thierno Alassane Sall, another candidate, also no relation, called it "high treason" and urged his supporters to gather in front of the National Assembly to protest and "remind MPs to stand on the right side of history". The proposal needed the support of three-fifths (i.e. 99) of the 165 deputies to pass. The ruling Benno Bokk Yakaar coalition, of which President Sall's Alliance for the Republic party is part, has a slight majority in parliament. There was a heated atmosphere in the chamber, and it was reported that some opposition MPs had been removed by security forces after they tried to block proceedings.

In the end 105 MPs voted for the proposal. A six-month postponement was originally proposed, but a last-minute amendment extended it to 10 months, or 15 December. Mr Sall reiterated that he was not planning to run for office again. But his critics accuse him of either trying to cling on to power or unfairly influencing whoever succeeds him. No sooner had he announced the unprecedented postponement than protesters marched across the capital, Dakar, to call for a reversal. Senegal has long been seen as one of the most stable democracies in West Africa. It is the only country in mainland West Africa that has never had a military coup. It has had

three largely peaceful handovers of power and never delayed a presidential election. Until now. In 2017, Senegalese troops led the West African mission sent to neighbouring The Gambia to force out long-time ruler Yahya Jammeh after he refused to accept he had lost an election. And in a region beset by coups, President Sall has been a key actor in the push by the Economic Community of West African States (Ecowas) to force military leaders to conduct elections and hand over power to civilians.

But Senegal's democratic credentials now hang in the balance, and a constitutional crisis is brewing. The country faces a critical test of its electoral integrity and judicial independence, analysts say. Tensions have been rising for more than two years following what the opposition say was a deliberate attempt to exclude them from the election by having their candidates charged with crimes they had not committed. One major opposition party was even banned. The authorities have denied using the legal system for political gain and President Sall said he was trying to calm things down by delaying the vote but this does not appear to have worked so far. "The decision has thrown Senegal into uncharted waters of a constitutional crisis," Mucahid Durmaz, senior West Africa analyst at risk intelligence company Verisk Maplecroft, tells the BBC. "The constitution requires elections to be organised at least 30 days before the end of the incumbent president's mandate. Sall's rule expires on 2 April. And the decree detailing the electoral calendar must be released 80 days before the vote takes place. Even if he appoints a transitional president after 2 April, the legality of it will be disputed."

Authorities restricted access to mobile internet services to prevent what they called "hateful and subversive messages" from spreading online

and posing a threat to public order - in other words to make it harder for protesters to organise.

Some residents tell the BBC they have been using wifi and Virtual Private Networks (VPN's) to bypass the curbs but not everyone is able to do this. The opposition has condemned the shutdown of the signal of private television channel Walf TV for "incitement to violence" over its coverage of the demonstrations.

Two opposition politicians, including former Prime Minister Aminata Touré, once a close ally of President Sall but now one of his harshest critics, were both briefly detained following the protests. Critics fear that this clampdown could plunge the country into further political turmoil which, by extension, could be dangerous for the whole West African region. Satisfaction with democracy in Senegal has declined sharply under Mr Sall. In 2013 Afrobarometer, a pollster, found that after Mr Sall had taken office, more than two-thirds of Senegalese people were fairly or very satisfied with democracy. By 2022 less than half were. However, Durmaz says he does not foresee the possibility of a military coup because Senegal has a "diverse range of political parties, a robust civil society and influential religious leaders who step in to mediate political disputes between the politicians". Twenty candidates had made the final list to contest the elections, but several more were excluded by the Constitutional Council, the judicial body that determines whether candidates have met the conditions required to run. Prominent among them were firebrand opposition leader Ousmane Sonko barred because of a libel conviction, and Karim Wade, the son of a former president, who was accused of having French nationality. They both say the cases against them are politically motivated. Despite the delay, it is unlikely Mr Sonko will be able to



participate in the election, as his party has already replaced him with Bassirou Faye who is also in jail but remains eligible to run, Mr Durmaz says. Mr Sonko has shown that he is able to mobilise his supporters on to the streets and so while he remains barred, tensions are likely to stay high. His banned Pastef party has vowed to push back against the delay, calling it a "serious threat to our democracy" and "contempt for the will of the people". This is not the first time leading opposition candidates have been barred from running in presidential elections. Both Karim Wade and Khalifa Sall were jailed for corruption in 2015 and 2018 respectively, and barred from running in 2019. This time, allegations of judicial corruption involving the Constitutional Council, brought by Karim Wade's party, prompted a parliamentary inquiry. President Sall justified the election delay by saying time was needed to resolve the

dispute that ensued between the Council and some members of parliament. Despite the widespread anger over the delay, Mr Wade's Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS) has backed it, and if its MPs vote with the government, the bill could pass. But Wole Ojewale, Dakar-based regional co-ordinator for Central Africa at the Institute for Security Studies, says the delay is not justified.

"The president is not in charge of the electoral process, and to the extent to which the electoral umpire has not raised doubts about their capacity to undertake the election. I don't think anything should derail the political process." Mr Sall's critics suggest he may have feared his chosen successor, Prime Minister Amadou Ba, was in danger of losing the election. "His [President Sall's] party is losing momentum. There are indications that they probably want to see how they can rejig, or probably replace their candidate," Ojewale

says. He says there is still a window to conduct the election as scheduled. Otherwise, the country may be plunged into widespread unrest, becoming a police state where civil liberties are eroded, a view Durmaz shares. Ecowas and the African Union have called for dialogue. France, the US and the EU have all called for an election as soon as possible. However, Durmaz says President Sall's international image would minimise any external pressure on him. "I do not expect a firm push by Ecowas to reverse the postponement of the election in Senegal," he says, noting that the credibility of regional organisations such as Ecowas and the AU "has been significantly tarnished due to their inability to confront the democratic deficit in civilian-run countries". All eyes will now be on the regional blocs to see how they treat yet another democratic headache in West Africa.

Prospects shaky for Philippines' govt and communist peace talks

MANILA: Fighting continues between the Philippine military and communist rebels despite an agreement to resume peace talks this month in an effort to end the world's longest-running communist armed rebellion. President Ferdinand Marcos Jr surprised many when, in November, his government announced an agreement with the National Democratic Front (NDF), the rebels' political wing, to restart peace talks that his predecessor Rodrigo Duterte had ended shortly after taking office.

In the agreement, signed in Oslo after months of secret negotiations facilitated by the Norwegian government, both parties acknowledged "the deep-rooted socioeconomic and political grievances" at the heart of the conflict and agreed to seek reforms. Since then, however, contradictory statements, public bickering and continued armed clashes between the military and the New People's Army (NPA), the communist party's armed wing, have tarnished hopes of an agreement. Many in the military apparatus - and especially within the government's controversial anti-communist task force - still want to "finish off the armed conflict by physically wiping out the [NPA] forces," Satur Ocampo, founder of the leftist Bayan Muna party-list group, told Al Jazeera. The Communist

Party of the Philippines (CPP) said late last year it remained focused on "waging extensive and intensive guerrilla warfare" and rebuilding NPA forces. The Philippine government was "very perplexed and disappointed" by the statement, National Security Council spokesman Jonathan Malaya told reporters earlier this month. However, the military has also continued armed operations against the NPA, including December air strikes on the southern island of Mindanao that killed nine alleged rebels. The Philippine government and NPA have been engaged for more than 50 years in a conflict that has killed more than 40,000 people. It peaked in the 1980s, during the martial law rule of Marcos's father, the dictator Ferdinand Marcos Sr. Over the years, there have been repeated announcements of peace talks, which have then collapsed. Marcos Jr's surprise move to reopen negotiations dovetails with the military's stated ambition to switch its focus from domestic conflict to "external or territorial defence".

military chief Romeo Bravner Jr told reporters in November. The Philippines has shifted closer to the United States due to a series of conflicts with Chinese vessels in the disputed South China Sea, which is claimed almost in its entirety by Beijing despite an

international tribunal ruling against it in 2016. Marcos initially opposed peace talks when he took office in June 2022. However, he may be growing weary after witnessing a "resurgence in armed fighting" in areas the military has claimed to have cleared, Ocampo said. "[Marcos] may be doubting the assurance of security forces that they can finish off the CPP-NPA within his term," which ends in 2028, Ocampo said. "He's opening up the option of seeking a negotiated settlement."

Under Philippine law, presidents can serve only one term in office. The November communique drew optimism partly because of its use of explicit language committing both parties to seek "socioeconomic and political reforms towards a just and lasting peace".

Numerous attempts at agrarian land reform in the Philippines have failed since the 1980s, leaving many rural farmers destitute and landless while families retain oligarchic control of land passed down from the colonial rule of Spain and the US. However, disagreement quickly emerged on how to institute reforms. The NDF wanted to reintroduce an agreement to distribute land forged during Duterte-era talks. But the office of presidential peace adviser Carlito Galvez Jr, which is leading negotiations, insisted the talks were

"new" and a "restart", raising concern within the NDF that he wanted to toss aside past agreements. Instead, Galvez has pitched "specific programmes that can be handled by the government and big business". Ocampo said. "There's nothing that touches on deep socioeconomic reforms."

National Security Adviser Eduardo Ano has also opposed removing the CPP-NPA from the country's list of "terrorist" organisations, along with freeing currently jailed peace negotiators - positions which appear to be nonstarters for the communist side. "It is critical that Marcos rescind earlier proclamations ... designating the NDF as terrorists," a CPP spokesperson told Al Jazeera.

"However, Marcos's officials ... have repeatedly expressed resistance to these measures." Julie de Lima, interim chairperson of the NDF negotiating panel, told Al Jazeera her group was negotiating for the release of consultants needed to forge [promised] agreements on socioeconomic reforms. "It will be very difficult without that," she said. "We still have this guarded optimism that these talks may proceed, [but] there are issues that must be resolved." Last month, Marcos claimed there were no remaining active NPA fronts as of December. — Aljazeera

US admits it did not give Iraq notice of strikes

WASHINGTON: The United States has admitted it did not notify the Iraqi government before its recent air strikes in the country after a top White House official claimed Baghdad had been informed in advance. State Department deputy spokesman Vedant Patel said that Iraqi officials were only informed after the strikes on Iranian-linked targets.

"Iraq, like every country in the region, understood that there would be a response after the deaths of our soldiers. As for this specific response, there was not a pre-notification," Patel told reporters. "We informed the Iraqis immediately after the strikes occurred." The clarification came after White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said that Washington had informed the Iraqi government in advance. Kirby said that he had responded to reporters' questions with the "information that I had been provided at the time". "It was not as specific as it could have been, and I regret any confusion caused," he said. "That said, we had made no secret - both to Iraqi officials and in public channels - that we would respond to the attacks on our troops. And, we did, in fact, officially notify Iraq, as appropriate with standard procedure."

US President Joe Biden ordered air strikes against 85 targets in Iraq and Syria alleged to be linked to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and pro-Iranian groups, following a drone attack in Jordan that killed three US troops.

Iraq condemned the strikes, which officials said killed 16 people, including civilians, as a violation of its sovereignty that placed the security in the region on the "brink of the abyss". Iraqi government spokesman Bassem al-Awadi rejected the suggestion that his country had helped to coordinate the attacks, accusing Washington of making a "false claim aimed at misleading international public opinion and disavowing legal responsibility". Tensions between Washington and Baghdad have escalated in recent months as the Biden administration has carried out strikes inside Iraq in response to a surge in attacks on US forces since the start of the war in Gaza that it has blamed on Iran-aligned groups. About 2,500 US troops are stationed in Iraq, a legacy of the US-led coalition's war against the ISIL (ISIS) group. — Aljazeera

UN chief appoints panel to assess UNRWA

NEW YORK: United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has announced the creation of an independent panel to assess the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). The aid agency has been under fire over accusations by Israel that 12 of its staff members were involved in the Hamas attacks on Israel on October 7.

More than a dozen countries - including the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom and Sweden - have suspended funding to the agency. The independent panel will be led by former French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna, who will work with three European research organisations, the UN said in a statement. The goal of the investigation is to "assess whether the agency is doing everything within its power to ensure neutrality and to respond to allegations of serious breaches when they are made". The European research groups working on the independent assessment are the Raoul Wallenberg Institute in Sweden, the Chr Michelsen Institute in Norway and the Danish Institute for Human Rights. The panel is due to submit an interim report to Guterres in late March and a final one in late April with, if necessary, recommendations for "improvement and strengthening" of the agency's mechanisms. This assessment is separate from an internal probe that the UN launched last month after the accusations were first made against the 12 UNRWA employees.

The October 7 attacks by

Hamas resulted in the deaths of 1,139 people, mostly civilians, according to an Al Jazeera tally based on official Israeli figures. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said last week that the UN agency has been "totally infiltrated" by Hamas, which has governed Gaza since 2007. UNRWA chief Philippe Lazzarini said he was looking forward to the findings of the review group. "I welcome the appointment by UN Secretary-General of an independent review group to assess how UNRWA ensures neutrality and responds to allegations of serious breaches. I look forward to the conclusion & recommendations of the report which will be made public," Lazzarini said in a social media post. Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz said that his government has evidence linking the agency to "terrorism" that it plans to submit to the UN panel. "We will submit all evidence highlighting UNRWA's ties to terrorism and its harmful effects on regional stability. It is imperative that this committee brings the truth to light," Katz wrote on the social media platform X. An Israeli intelligence dossier alleged about 190 UNRWA employees, including teachers, have doubled as Hamas or Islamic Jihad fighters, the Reuters news agency reported. Palestinian officials have accused Israel of falsifying information to tarnish UNRWA. The UN fired nine of the accused workers, condemned "the abhorrent alleged acts" and launched an investigation into the allegations. Lazzarini is visiting three

Gulf states this week to drum up support after donors suspended funding to the agency. It warned last week that it might be forced to shut down its operations by the end of February if funding does not resume. Lazzarini said on X he met with the United Arab Emirates' (UAE) Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan to discuss UNRWA's work in "preserving the stability in the region" and delivering aid to two million people in Gaza. Spokesperson Juliette Touma told Reuters news agency that Lazzarini would visit Qatar and Kuwait later this week. "We are hoping those that paused [funding] will reconsider and others will step forward as well," she said.

Kuwait and Qatar rank 19th and 20th in UNRWA's list of top 20 donors, giving \$12m and \$10.5m respectively in 2022. The UAE was not listed. Meanwhile, Spain's foreign minister, José Manuel Albares, said his government will give 3.5m euros (\$3.8m) to the agency to help it maintain its activities in the short term. Touma, however, noted that it was not nearly enough to offset the gap estimated at about \$440m. Promising to eliminate Hamas, Israel launched a devastating bombardment and ground assault on Gaza, killing at least 27,478 people, mostly women and children, according to Palestinian authorities. More than 80 percent of Gaza's population has been displaced and vast swathes of the territory have been reduced to rubble during the Israeli campaign. — Aljazeera

Scepticism as Gibran Rakabuming Raka runs for Indonesia's vice presidency

JAKARTA: For more than 40 years, Sarti has been cycling his pedicab around the streets of the Indonesian city of Surakarta, or Solo. It's a tough job, especially in the relentless heat, and the wiry 67-year-old's muscles strain as he pushes on the pedals to manoeuvre his vehicle through the traffic. Sweat drips from his brow and he puffs his way along the narrow backstreets, his passengers seated in the canopied cab in front of him.

For all the effort, business can be slow, and Sarti sometimes earns just one dollar a day. Government support has been crucial for his survival, and he has nothing but praise for President Joko Widodo, better known as Jokowi, who was Solo's mayor from 2005 to 2012. "I liked Jokowi, I liked him so much. He was such a good mayor of Solo. He would visit all the areas of the city, handing out aid and groceries to people and providing financial assistance," he told Al Jazeera. "He really cared about people who were struggling." But when it comes to Jokowi's son, it's a different story. Gibran Rakabuming Raka followed

in his father's footsteps to run for mayor of Solo in 2020 and is now a vice presidential candidate in the elections scheduled for February 14. Gibran is just 36, and despite being mayor since February 2021, Sarti says he has never met him. "He has never visited many of the poorer parts of the city, like his father used to," he said. "Gibran picks the people he wants to help. He doesn't help everyone. He doesn't help all the residents of Solo." Solo, despite its stature as the former home of the president and the historic royal capital of Java, is a relatively small city with a population of about half a million people. Known for its old-world charm, it boasts two royal palaces, is renowned for the quality of its traditional batik and is surrounded by rice fields.

When Gibran, the eldest of Jokowi's three children, announced that he was planning to run as Solo's mayor, many residents were surprised, even those who had known him since he was a child. "He is a good kid, all of Jokowi's children are. They are polite and hard workers, but I was surprised

when he became mayor of Solo because I thought it was too soon for him to hold that kind of office," Slamet Raharjo, a longtime friend of the family, told Al Jazeera. "Logically, you have to take it step by step. You can't create leadership in a moment. It is a psychological process that takes time, but he has been forced to grow up quickly." Gibran, who was born in 1987, had never appeared to harbour any political aspirations. He studied at secondary school in Singapore and then in Australia before returning to Singapore and earning a bachelor's degree in management. Most expected him to join the family's now famous furniture business, as his father had done. Instead, Gibran opened a catering business in 2010, and five years later a chain of pancake shops. Markobar, as he called the business, focused heavily on digital marketing, but has since closed. Local residents laughed when asked if Gibran had ever personally fried any of the sweet treats. Markobar had been designed to appeal to a social media crowd and fea-

tured signature dishes of eight and 16 flavours such as chocolate and green tea, priced from \$2.50 for a single topping. In a city where the pancakes, called mutabak, are known as a cheap street food snack, Markobar was considered expensive. While the pancakes flopped, local residents say Gibran's tenure as mayor has been more successful. They say he made efforts to improve the city by further developing infrastructure and public transport, as well as designing initiatives to foster inclusivity. These included setting up decorations in front of the town hall to celebrate various religious holidays, including during the Christmas period, which some saw as an effort to enhance religious tolerance in a country where 87 percent of the population is Muslim.

Fransiskus Xaverius Hadi Rudyatmo, who was deputy under Jokowi and took over from him in 2012 until 2021, told Al Jazeera that he had been blindsided when Gibran's vice presidential candidacy was first mentioned. — Aljazeera

Zelenskyy confirms plans for military shake-up

KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has said he plans to reshuffle Ukraine's military and political leadership. The comments, on Italian RAI TV in an interview broadcast, follow weeks of speculation that Zelenskyy intends to dismiss Valery Zaluzhny, commander-in-chief of Ukraine's military. "A reset, a new beginning is necessary" and it is "not about a single person but about the direction of the country's leadership", Zelenskyy said.

"I'm thinking about this replacement," he said, "but you can't say here we replaced a single person." Zaluzhny, who was appointed by Zelenskyy months before Russia invaded in February 2022, is popular with troops and the wider population. He has denied speculation that he has political ambitions. He and the president have been at odds

for some time over the conduct of the war, as the country grapples with low ammunition, personnel shortages after a failed counteroffensive, and the need for more troops. Zelenskyy sought to downplay the implications during his comments on the reshuffle.

"When we talk about this, I mean a replacement of a series of state leaders, not just in a single sector like the military," he said. "If we want to win, we must all push in the same direction, convinced of victory; we cannot be discouraged, let our arms fall; we must have the right positive energy," the president continued as he spoke of Kyiv's struggle to oust Russian forces following the 2014 annexation of Crimea, the occupation of parts of the Donbas, and the invasion of February 2022. Ukrainian news outlet Ukrainska Pravda reported

the same day that Zelenskyy is also considering removing General Staff Chief Serhiy Shapatala. Zaluzhny, meanwhile, congratulated Shapatala on his birthday and posted a picture of them together on Facebook.

Speculation has gripped Ukraine for weeks over Zaluzhny's position and relationship with the president as the war against the Russian invasion nears its second anniversary. At the end of last year, Zelenskyy said he had rejected a request by the military to mobilise up to 500,000 people and demanded to know how it would be organised and paid for. Tensions between the two men were also publicised last year after the general told The Economist in an interview that the war had entered a stalemate. The claim earned a furious denial from Zelenskyy. — Aljazeera

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Kashmir Dispute and the World Peace

Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar 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. While addressing the Kashmir Legislative Assembly on the occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day, Kakar accused India of presenting a false narrative over the past years and trying to weaken the indigenous Kashmir freedom movement by wrongly labelling it as terrorism. Premier reaffirmed that Pakistan did not want any conflict in the region, however, it was fully capable of strongly retaliating against any attack on its soil. India has long been following an ambitious hegemonic agenda to become a regional power in the greater South Asia region by perpetuating its influence from the Bay of Bengal to the Persian Gulf and the Maldives to Central Asia in the ploy of regional trade and political cooperation. Indian Rulers had used all possible options such as political influence, military coercion and blackmail, and state-sponsored terrorism against its neighbouring States in a bid to establish its monopoly in the region. On the domestic front, the RSS-influenced BJP swept into power, displacing the Secular Indian National Congress in med 2014, which began to remake secular India into a Hindu supremacist state and squeezed the space for minorities particularly Muslims who formed nearly one-fourth of the Hindu majority India. Meanwhile, New Delhi ruthlessly used all tools and tactics including state power and secret intelligence operations to suppress its minorities and curb multiple freedom movements running in India's illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, Indian Punjab, Mani Pur, Nagaland, Assam and other states. Meanwhile, the Indian government used diplomatic influence and pressure tactics against Indian dissents abroad and targeted them on foreign soil through agents or mercenaries to silence their voices exposing the true face of the fake democracy of the world. Historically, Pakistan had been the prime victim of India's blatant hostility and foiled multiple aggressions against its territorial sovereignty whilst Islamabad had always faced Indian state-sponsored terrorism throughout the past which now extends to the targeting of individual Pakistani citizens on our soil. Recently, Indian secret agents killed several Pakistani nationals in their hometowns through three-country operations from the Middle East. Pakistan has time and again raised the issue of India's state sponsorship of terrorism and the use of violence in neighbouring countries as a state policy which significantly destabilised South Asia in recent decades. Pakistan made repeated calls to attract the attention of the global community but failed until Canadian authorities accused an Indian diplomat of playing a role in the killing of a Canadian citizen and the US government blamed Indian intelligence for an assassination bid on an American Sikh in New York late last year. Ironically, a callous disregard for international law and norms of the 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. Pakistan would continue to expose all such attempts and ensure the security of its citizens. Currently, the Modi-led BJP government increasingly lashes unabated brutality in the illegally occupied valley. The brewing humanitarian and security crises in the IIOJK seriously threaten regional peace and stability. Pakistan has always abided by international laws and demonstrated resilience, however, the Indian government unashamedly implemented its nefarious designs by taking controversial administrative and legislative steps aimed at changing the special status of disputed territory and bulldozing UNSC's resolutions on the Jammu and Kashmir dispute. The status quo could not be maintained for a long time as the global community is silent over New Delhi's grave violation of UNSC resolutions in sharp contradiction to the fundamental rights of over 14 million Kashmiris. There is a serious risk of a clash between the two nuclear-armed states over the Kashmir dispute. The United Nations and the global community must realize their responsibility by playing an effective role in the resolution of the Kashmir issue which is a nuclear flash point and poses a grave risk to global peace and stability.

Use of internet and online safety

CHAIRMAN Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has declared that the PTA is committed to ensuring a safe online environment, particularly for the country's youth and children. On the occasion of Safer Internet Day, the PTA Chairman told his countrymen that the PTA recognizes the critical role that the Internet plays in our lives. According to him, 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.

The Internet has become an indispensable part of modern life, impacting nearly every aspect of society, economy, and culture. It provides us with a vast repository of knowledge and information, facilitates instant communication, enables e-commerce, allows businesses to reach a global market and consumers to shop conveniently from anywhere in the world. It breaks geographical barriers and connects people, spreads education, empowers individuals and societies, provides entertainment at all locations in the air, sea and land. The Internet offers numerous benefits, it also comes with several disadvantages and harmful effects such as cybersecurity threats, online fraud, addiction and distraction of children, misuse of social media, privacy concerns, cyberbullying, misinformation and propaganda etc.

In fact, online safety is a global issue, internet safety and provision of a conducive environment is a collective problem of the society, and the state. The Pakistani society has a traditional Islamic environment and upholds religious sentiments. Whereas uncontrolled flow of information, unrestricted access to western culture on social media has largely affected our youths and children while disturbing the whole environment/culture of the society.

There is a need for coordinated efforts and collaboration between the government and the masses to create a digital world that prioritizes the safety of every individual, protects social environment and facilitates constructive use of the internet by the users. Although PTA has much acknowledgement abroad, there is very little presence and public awareness about the role and task of the authority. An awareness campaign about disadvantages and misuse of the internet along with PTAs role and assistance in case of any risks/ fraud is crucial for users to navigate the online world safely and responsibly while reporting any abnormality or online hazard to the concerned authority in due course of time. So that our society mitigates online risks comfortably in the future.

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Israel belatedly beginning to face some accountability

Chris Doyle

ONE element has always been painfully absent from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Its absence has allowed a more powerful bullying occupying power to dominate and subjugate a captive occupied people, the Palestinians. Yet, now, as an Israeli genocide may be in progress in Gaza, it might finally be making a late appearance - a last-minute but vital entrant into the proceedings: accountability. In other conflicts, it is a player. Palestinian groups, including Hamas, typically pay for their crimes with their lives and do not even get to defend themselves in court.

Pretty much ever since this conflict first erupted 100 years ago, the Zionist movement and subsequently Israel have rarely, if ever, had to account for their actions. At times, there may have been reversals, such as in 1956, when US President Dwight Eisenhower compelled Israel to pull back from the Sinai and Gaza. But 11 years later, Israeli forces were back. And, in the case of Gaza, Israel has remained as an occupier ever since.

The debate has been ever-present. What would happen if Israel was held to account? Would it change its behavior if it genuinely faced consequences for its actions and crimes? What if the US severed the pipeline of billions of dollars of aid and the massive arsenal of the latest weaponry?

Pre-Oct. 7, Israel was merrily continuing its system of apartheid, expanding settlements, demolishing Palestinian homes, engaging in forcible transfer and collectively punishing the Palestinians in Gaza. War crimes were witnessed and recorded but not challenged. Israeli soldiers and settlers killed record numbers of Palestinian civilians and children. The copy and paste press releases of concern from a handful of European embassies were laughed off with contempt by Israeli ministers, not least those in this most extreme coalition in Israeli history.

Yet, the Israeli leadership's appetite for crushing the Palestinian people, its institutions and future since Oct. 7 may have finally nudged the US and others

into a new approach.

A tot up of the varying legal challenges Israel faces is telling. Since 2021, the International Criminal Court has been investigating possible war crimes and crimes against humanity in Palestine. Many states had opposed this for spurious reasons. Then-UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson wrote in 2021 to an anti-Palestinian lobby group in his party to state that the UK did not support the court's investigation into Israel, that it did not have jurisdiction and that it was a "partial and prejudicial attack on a friend and ally of the UK." Yet, this position changed in November. The UK has shifted to being less hostile to the court.

The International Court of Justice, meanwhile, has Israel effectively on trial for genocide, having issued

Remember, the Israeli occupation is not illegal in and of itself, but it is meant to be temporary. Five and a half decades stretches that term beyond the farcical. How will the US and its allies react? Many of them did not approve of the court being involved in the first place.

Israel's allies did not welcome last month's ruling, not least because their involvement in arming Israel raises uncomfortable questions about complicity in genocide. Biden said the case was "meritless." The British foreign secretary deemed it "nonsense." Fifteen judges thought otherwise. Who would you trust on a matter of international law? Leaders of states terrified they will be found complicit or 15 eminent legal figures who have carefully considered the available arguments and

- and almost nothing on Gaza.

Instead, the US and UK have pushed on two major issues. The first criticism of Israeli leaders post-Oct. 7 was after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rejected outright a Palestinian state. Bombings of hospitals, schools, universities, bakeries, churches, mosques, libraries and water works were not enough, nor was the killing of 11,500 Palestinian children in Gaza. But on statehood, there was pushback. Both the US and UK are revising their positions on recognition and even contemplating doing it. This is not so much to recognize legitimate Palestinian national rights, but to send a warning shot to Netanyahu and his entourage that Israel's allies are serious about the two-state solution. The second area - one that is perhaps more dramatic - was the US, EU and UK's actions on settlements and settlers. First came the decision to ban a number of violent settlers. Many said "big deal," but it acknowledged for the first time that Israeli actors may face consequences.

Secondly, building on these visa bans, US President Joe Biden last week issued a historic executive order with far-reaching implications. The headline was the imposition of sanctions on four violent settlers. Yet, if you dissect the order, it has considerable powers. Officials have also admitted that settler Cabinet ministers such as Itamar Ben-Gvir were considered for sanctions. Others saw Biden as having electoral motives behind this move, given how he is bleeding support over his unwavering backing of Israel. The UN Relief and Works Agency, in contrast, knows all about proper accountability and even improper levels of accountability. It is being treated as guilty until proven innocent. Imagine if the same was done to Israel.

This risks getting ahead of ourselves. The US has not swapped sides. But we should recognize that these baby steps can become bigger. For now, the door has been wedged open. For those who deem justice and accountability to be pillars of a final settlement and genuine peace, it matters.

provisional measures after deeming that there were plausible grounds that Israel was perpetrating genocide against the Palestinians. Tel Aviv has to report on its adherence to the orders of the court in a few weeks. Unsatisfactory progress could lead to further provisional measures.

Donor states will be most concerned not about the potential genocide, as they should be, but the issue of Israel facilitating the entry of humanitarian aid. The anti-Palestinian mob still tries to smear the court's judgment, but even the Israeli ad hoc judge Aaron Barak agreed that Israel must let in more humanitarian aid and prevent and punish any incitement to genocide.

But many forget that the International Court of Justice is also about to rule on whether the 57-year-old Israeli occupation is illegal.

his illness. There is no suggestion of incapacity, now or in the immediate future, and so he should be able to carry out his constitutional duties as usual, even though he must postpone engagements because of his treatment. There are many precedents for the business of state being carried on even when monarchs have been at death's door, which His Majesty is manifestly not. For the last five years of her reign, Queen Victoria could barely walk - her Diamond Jubilee service at St Paul's Cathedral in 1897 was conducted on the steps at the front around her carriage, which she was incapable of leaving without being carried by footmen. Her physical incapability did not prevent her dealing with her state papers right up to the end of her life in January 1901.

King George V was a lifelong heavy smoker, and

his health was further compromised after being thrown from his horse on a visit to the Western Front in 1915. The horse then rolled on top of him, breaking his pelvis. In 1928, aged 63, he fell so ill with septicaemia and lung problems that it was widely feared he would die. The Prince of Wales, then on a tour of Africa, was advised by the government to come home, and did so at the greatest speed then possible.

The King recovered, albeit slowly, and spent the winter and early spring of 1929 convalescing at Bognor. Even in the most acute phase of his illness, once the Prince of Wales had returned to England, the King could continue his most important constitutional duties. This was the case, too, in his last illness, which came on rapidly in January 1936. Even on the morning of the day

he died, he convened a council of state in his bedroom at Sandringham and, despite being almost incapable of holding a pen, scrawled his mark on some urgent state documents. It was shortly after this last act of state that his nurse, to cheer him up, told him he would soon be well enough to have another nice rest at Bognor, to which legend has it that he replied: "Bugger Bognor."

King Charles's grandfather, King George VI, was also a heavy smoker, and developed arteriosclerosis and lung cancer. In 1949 he required thoracic surgery but, like his father, continued to manage all urgent matters of state. His elder daughter, the late Queen, took over many of his public duties, as did her mother, Queen Elizabeth. In September 1951, his left lung was removed, but this did not prevent Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh leaving the following month to tour

Kim wants world to take his threat seriously

Frida Ghitis

THE world once again is trying to parse the stance of North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un. Is Kim positioning his regime to gain from the possibility that former President Donald Trump will return to the White House a year from now - or preparing to start a war? North Korea watchers long ago grew accustomed to Kim's dramatic pronouncements and spectacular military tests aimed at projecting power. But in recent weeks, something has changed. And some experts think this time we should be alarmed.

Kim "has made a strategic decision to go to war," wrote Robert Carlin and Siegfried Hecker, two scholars with experience in national security who are not known for exaggerating the North Korean threat. The ominous assessment is even more troubling because the world is now facing two raging military conflicts, in Ukraine and the Middle East, each with potential to escalate and both pitting adversaries of the West against US allies. That detail, which might sound incidental to what happens in North Korea, may be the key to why Kim is making moves that sound like the prelude to war. That doesn't mean the risks are not real.

"The situation on the Korean Peninsula is more dangerous than it has been at any time since early June 1950," warned Carlin and Hecker in an article that has made waves across the globe. Although they do not link Kim's belligerent moves to events elsewhere, June 1950, by the way, was when North Korea's grandfather, Kim Il Sung, launched an invasion of South Korea, triggering the Korean War, which left millions dead, involved more than a dozen countries and devastated both North and South Korea. After North Korea was defeated, the fighting stopped with a 1953 armistice but a peace agreement was never reached. Today, nearly 30,000 US troops remain in South Korea. Kim has certainly been signaling that something fundamental has shifted and he clearly wants the world to take his threats seriously.

For decades the Democratic People's Republic of North Korea or DPRK, has had two explicit goals. One is to peacefully reunify with the South, the other is to normalize relations with the US. Both of these seem to have been discarded. Kim just ended the policy of peaceful reunification, calling South Korea the DPRK's "primary foe" and "principal enemy," ordering the demolition of Pyongyang's giant Arch of Reunification monument, built by his father, and disbanding state agencies tasked with reunification. Simultaneously, he said North Korea tested, among other weapons, medium-range hypersonic missile technology that could allow attacks on the South to dodge antimissile systems. South Korea is responding with equally forceful rhetoric. On Tuesday, at a cabinet meeting in Seoul, President Yoon Suk Yeol said: "If North Korea provokes, we will punish them multiple times as hard."

Carlin and Hecker say what we're hearing is not the familiar Kim bluster. In their view, Kim has had a transformative change of perspective. Above all, they say, he

has decided that the strategy of seeking to normalize relations with the United States has failed. That conclusion was reached after the 2018 and 2019 summits with then-President Trump. They are not the only ones who say the failure to reach agreement was an embarrassment (perhaps for both) but was reportedly traumatic for Kim. In 2021, the Biden administration tried to restart talks, vowing to meet "anywhere, anytime, without preconditions." North Korea has ignored the overtures, which the US recently repeated. Kim, however, passed a law in 2022 declaring, "no denuclearization, no negotiation and no bargaining chip to trade." But there's more happening beyond the failure of talks with the US. Kim has developed a strategic relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin, traveling to Russia for warm in-person meetings and providing armaments to bolster Russia's depleted arsenal in its war against Ukraine. The two countries deny it, but there's evidence the DPRK has sent more than a million artillery pieces, and the Biden administration says Russia is using advanced North Korean missiles against Ukraine. So, what's Kim thinking?

It's impossible to know with certainty, but there's little question that he's at the very least trying to create problems for the West at a time when it has its hands full with two major wars. With the US occupied with other crises, Kim may be wagering that his own hand is stronger; that the US would be more inclined to make concessions. But perhaps most importantly, a military crisis in East Asia, involving top US allies (South Korea and perhaps Japan) would be a boon to Putin, distracting the West from Ukraine just as the Middle East has already done.

It's also possible that Kim is trying to strengthen his negotiating position in advance of a possible new Trump administration. Politico recently reported that, if he's reelected, Trump is planning to offer Kim a deal that would lift economic sanctions and allow him to keep his nuclear weapons if he freezes the nuclear program. Trump said the story is a fabrication, without exactly denying the report. The warning about North Korea cannot be ignored, and the US, South Korea and Japan should update their planning. But there are reasons to be skeptical of the argument that a massive assault is in the cards. It's hard to imagine that if he were planning to launch a full assault, Kim would be sending large quantities of his weapons stocks to Russia. And, however erratic, would Kim start an all-out war that he would surely lose?

What is beyond question now is that Kim, whose only meaningful relationship used to be with China, has now entered the Russian orbit. His foreign minister was just in Moscow and North Korean media say Putin will visit Pyongyang. In an echo of the Cold War, the world is dividing in rival camps and no conflict is completely isolated from the others. The wars in Ukraine and the Middle East increase the risk of a new Korean conflict, raising the potential stakes for everyone.

CNN

Knowing he has the support of his people will strengthen the King's spirits

Simon Heffer

THE news that His Majesty the King has been diagnosed with cancer, just 17 months into his reign, has come as a profound shock to his people. However, it will also deepen their affection for him, not least because of the sad fact that hardly a family in this country or throughout the Commonwealth has been untouched by the scourge of this disease.

We must all hope that the prayers and wishes of millions that the King will recover speedily will be answered. But those millions will be acutely aware of the worry, concern and debilitation that accompany such a diagnosis, an awareness that can only deepen the bond of fellow feeling that they have developed with our sovereign. It is typical of the King's openness and straightforwardness that he should share the news of his diagnosis and not con-

ceal it. The palace has said he has done so to avoid speculation, but it is also a recognition that the health of the head of state is a matter of great public interest and, in this case, deep concern. Also, knowing that he has the sympathy and support of his people, the King will be helped to keep his spirits, and those of the Queen and the rest of his family, high at a time of physical and psychological challenge.

The seriously ill sometimes smile wryly when those who care about them tell them they are "not alone", for it is only the patient who can fight the disease. But the tsunami of goodwill on which the King will be borne during his own battle will be enormous. His Majesty appeared in public on Sunday, going to church at Sandringham, and looked tired but fit. We are, it seems, a long way from there being any constitutional issue stemming from

his illness. There is no suggestion of incapacity, now or in the immediate future, and so he should be able to carry out his constitutional duties as usual, even though he must postpone engagements because of his treatment. There are many precedents for the business of state being carried on even when monarchs have been at death's door, which His Majesty is manifestly not. For the last five years of her reign, Queen Victoria could barely walk - her Diamond Jubilee service at St Paul's Cathedral in 1897 was conducted on the steps at the front around her carriage, which she was incapable of leaving without being carried by footmen. Her physical incapability did not prevent her dealing with her state papers right up to the end of her life in January 1901.

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Canada. Despite his obviously grave illness, they then left for Kenya and Australia on Jan 31 1952. Less than a week later, on Feb 6, the King died in his sleep of a heart attack. Even in her great old age, the late Queen did her duties scrupulously, meeting her last prime minister just two days before her death. The King knows that, in the unlikely event of his being incapacitated, counsellors of state - the Prince of Wales, the Queen, the Princess Royal and the Duke of Edinburgh - have the legal authority to carry out his state duties.

The last regency in this country was declared in 1811, when George III was insane. We are far from such contingencies being needed now. The King is said to be "positive" about his recovery, and so should we all be. It will be business as usual for some time yet.

The Telegraph

Regional war is upon us if Biden does not halt the Gaza carnage

THE recent missile strikes against Iran-backed Al-Hashd Al-Sha'abi militants in Iraq may have been one of America's largest military interventions in years, but they were just one maneuver in a rapidly escalating conflict across many states, encompassing increasingly fierce military exchanges with the Houthis in Yemen. Israel has simultaneously been carrying out a succession of targeted killings of Revolutionary Guard officers in Syria. Tehran invariably fulminates that such assassinations "will not go unanswered" - although, if that is true, we are still awaiting retribution for the US killing of Qassem Soleimani in 2020.

The US attacks were retaliation for the drone strike that killed three US soldiers in a military base at the strategically crucial intersection between Jordan, Syria and Iraq. US troops there have labored to prevent Daesh from reestablishing transregional networks, while obstructing Tehran-backed paramilitaries from consolidating a corridor of control through to the Mediterranean.

So, it is not surprising that these proxies have incessantly attacked this location, seeking to compel the Americans to leave altogether, with more than 160 attacks on US targets since Oct. 7 alone. An Iraqi spokesman accused the US of turning Iraqi territory into a "battle-ground for settling scores," perfectly encapsulating how Iraq has been exploited for too many years.

The Al-Hashd Al-Sha'abi umbrella coalition of Iran-backed militants was constituted in 2014, supposedly to fight Daesh. But since Daesh's defeat, these forces have doubled in size to about 240,000 personnel, with a commensurate expansion of their budget, generously provided by the Iraqi state. This entity's "axis of resistance" pretensions highlight its aspiration to dominate not just Iraq and Syria, but the entire region. As with the Houthis, many of the Hashd's component factions were established, armed and trained under the tutelage of the Quds

Force and Lebanese Hezbollah. While these militias operate at Iran's behest, they are like a sack of wildcats, uncertainly wielded by Quds Force Commander Esmael Ghaani and engaging in fierce rivalry to dominate their respective mafia fiefdoms. Iraqi factions such as Harakat Hezbollah Al-Nujaba and Kata'ib Hezbollah have been dangerously goading each other into which can most brazenly

At the risk of stating the obvious, the only route out of this inexorable hour-by-hour escalation is to bring the Gaza war to an end. Israel has spectacularly failed to eradicate Hamas, so operations there now appear solely designed to retain Benjamin Netanyahu in power at the cost of tens of thousands of Palestinian lives - but they could easily trigger something infinitely worse. By all accounts, the US has been engaged in frantic high-level diplomacy to achieve comprehensive Arab rapprochement with Israel in exchange for Israel's recognition of a two-state solution, along with Hamas releasing its hostages. The success of such a grandiose scheme would indeed be transformative, though it requires Netanyahu to halt the bloodshed and waive his hostility to a Palestinian state. It also relies on Tehran not deploying its proxies in a blocking role.

attack foreign forces.

However, at the first sign of a more serious American response, a rapidly backpedaling Kata'ib Hezbollah leader Abu Hussein Al-Hamidawi said the group was halting missile attacks. Even though the group has Quds Force personnel in its leadership council, Al-Hamidawi vigorously denied any Iranian coordination. Meanwhile, Harakat Hezbollah Al-Nujaba mocked its rival's "cowardice" and pledged to continue its attacks. Kata'ib Hezbollah's assertion that it had halted attacks to "prevent embarrassment to the Iraqi government" was risible, given how the group has forged a career out of undermining Iraqi sovereignty. It was also an acknowledgment of tensions among these paramilitary groups that hold seats in government at the same time as staging attacks against a superpower that Iraq is highly dependent on.

Ayatollah Khomeini once said

Baria Alamuddin

that maintaining the Islamic Republic was a duty "above all duties." And, as CIA director William Burns aptly noted, this regime is "ready to fight to its last regional proxy" in the cause of self-preservation, even if it must incinerate its paramilitary armies and the entire region in the process. Lebanon particularly fears being dragged into a regionwide war that would displace and kill hundreds

of thousands. Even if the worst-case scenario is avoided, the conflict has already chronically destabilized this bankrupt, crisis-ridden nation, with widespread use of phosphorus bombs further crippling agriculture in southern areas that are still impacted by unexploded cluster ordnance from 2006.

The Gaza conflict has made US President Joe Biden deeply unpopular among young, multiethnic pro-Palestinian demographics in crucial swing constituencies: hence the ludicrous announcement of sanctions on a grand total of four Israeli settlers complicit in the tsunami of violence against West Bank Palestinians. On the subject of strikes on US forces in Iraq and America's response, White House security spokesman John Kirby said: "The goal here is to get these attacks to stop. We're not looking for a war with Iran." But regionwide attacks will not stop without Tehran being held definitively to

account.

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Consequently, as well as taking decisive action to demonstrate to the ayatollahs that warmongering will only bring catastrophe to the gates of Tehran, Biden must bend Israel to his will in a manner America has never done before. It is not as if Washington lacks the levers: Israel is dependent on US military aid, American support at the UN Security Council and the US' ability to mobilize global support. It is also not as if Biden has much to lose from falling out with a politically dead in the water Netanyahu. Conversely, if the conflict was allowed to worsen and Iran's proxy militias, with their hundreds of thousands of soldiers and vast missile arsenals, did decide to embark on war, the US and its allies would be instantly drawn into this morass to prevent Israel being utterly destroyed. If not for the sake of humanity, Biden certainly wishes to avoid this doomsday scenario in an election year. He must therefore jettison the ludicrous half measures that only create the illusion of doing something and use all levers at his disposal to compel Netanyahu to immediately halt this futile, genocidal war.

Arab News

Tunisia's permanent state of flux

Hafed Al-Ghwell

plummeting investment-to-gross domestic product ratio - from 25 percent in the early 2000s to under 10 percent today - crystallizes the economy's irreversible descent.

More worryingly, election years typically see larger expenditures, since the ruling elite resort to doling out public cash to "buy" legitimacy. In Tunisia's case, it will only tighten an already constricted fiscal space, as shown in the 2024 budget's troubling prioritizations. A staggering 77 percent of allocations are directed toward government debt service, civil sector pay and subsidies, leaving less than 7 percent for critical investments targeting, for instance, job creation in the private sector.

It raises significant questions about the sustainability of public finances and the country's economic development vision as oil prices edge higher, coupled with a volatile dollar exchange rate. Convergent impacts of global crises, from the war in Ukraine to convulsions in the Middle East and even climate change, necessitate a reevaluation of state budgeting. However, the Tunisian parliament's rubber-stamping of Carthage Palace's budget law indicates a troubling continuation of past fiscal practices, with an overreliance on government debt and payroll expenditures.

Such an approach not only limits the room for crucial investments but also casts a shadow over the medium-term prospects of the country, especially given the troubling structure of Tunisia's state resources. It mandates robust reforms and a prudent fiscal strategy to navigate the imminent economic difficulties posed by excessive borrowing and unbalanced public finances. According to Fitch Ratings, a credit rating agency, the fiscal financing gap is substantial, pegged at more than 16 percent of GDP annually until 2025.

The dimming prospects of a deal with the IMF heighten the urgency for serious interventions, both locally and from partners abroad, lest the current trajectory makes Tunisia's plunge inevitable. Even as Fitch predicts the Tunisian government could procure about \$2.5 billion in 2024, a cloud of uncertainty looms over these projections. This includes anticipated loans from Saudi Arabia and the African Export-Import Bank that are currently not guaranteed. Without a clear path forward and with chal-

lenging Eurobond repayments on the horizon, Tunisia's economic resilience hangs in the balance.

Preparing for the potential of a default scenario is an unavoidably pragmatic step. Donors and global partners should be ready to supply emergent aid to avoid a complete societal breakdown that would accompany a collapse. However, international involvement must transcend mere crisis management; it must facilitate the resumption of constructive dialogue toward a sustainable and inclusive economic model, as well as a new social contract.

Yet, such a task will be daunting in Tunisia's current political climate, which eschews external influences that are increasingly perceived as colluding with the gilded few at the expense of the broader population. After all, mandating austerity as a remedy for Tunisia's woes will only deepen social discontent, in contravention of top-down populism that ransacks the national budget to placate unrest while ignoring underlying vulnerabilities. Thus, the prospect of negotiating with international bodies like the IMF for relief or restructuring has become a double-edged sword, promising temporary respite while also setting the stage for social upheaval.

Tunisia's current trajectory points toward an intractable "polycrisis," characterized by economic insolvency, political instability and social unrest. The gravity of the situation demands a multifaceted approach that goes beyond mere financial bailouts. International actors, alongside local stakeholders, must work collaboratively to address the root causes of Tunisia's maladies. This includes advocating for political reforms that restore democratic norms, supporting economic policies that spur growth and reduce debt, and fostering a societal dialogue to heal the divisions. The path forward is fraught with challenges, which the Tunisian government and its existing fiscal policies are unprepared to confront without substantial external support and internal reform. It is a stark reminder of the turbulent path transitioning societies often encounter and the international dimension of their struggle for stability, sovereignty and sustainability. However, the alternative - state collapse - would have far-reaching implications not just for Tunisia but for the entire region.

Land of wars, surprises and earthquakes

Ghassan Charbel

fighters were surprised by the weakness of the Israeli security measures in the areas they attacked and the extent of the infiltration they achieved. They ended up abducting far more Israelis and left far more Israeli victims than they had anticipated.

The story also stresses that the Israeli authorities were taken by surprise by the extent of Hamas' breach. They were left with no choice but to launch a wide-scale, destructive war. The shocks did not end there. Israel was also surprised at the extent, complexity and depth of Hamas' tunnels and the movement's ability to keep on fighting in spite of the massive losses incurred in its ranks and among civilians. America itself was surprised by Hamas' operation, which shook the settlements and settlers to the core and exposed the weakness of Israel's security measures. Washington was quick to intervene and side firmly with Israel, sending its warships to prevent the war from spilling over into the region.

The story also says that Sinwar expected Israel's response to be strong and for it to take a similar, or perhaps firmer, approach to those adopted in its previous wars on Gaza. He did not expect Israel to launch an all-out war aimed at eliminating Hamas completely from Gaza - and even eliminating Gaza itself by displacing its people. On the other side, Iran was surprised by the war threat- ening to take Gaza out of the confrontation between the Palestinians and the Israelis, which would effectively take the Palestinian ring away from the "axis of resistance" that is so important

China improves law to eradicate terrorism

Wang Jiang

TERRORISM is one of the most serious challenges facing the international community. Acts of violence not only violate basic human rights but also have a direct impact on the socioeconomic development of all countries, with broad and far-reaching consequences for global stability and growth.

China has been a victim of terrorism, with outfits such as the "East Turkestan Islamic Movement", which has been banned by the United Nations Security Council, posing a threat to the country's national security and territorial integrity. The separatist "East Turkestan Islamic Movement" has incited, planned and carried out a number of violent terrorist attacks in China, causing the loss of lives and property. And its victims have been members of many ethnic groups. China opposes all forms of terrorism, extremism and separatism, and has cracked down on such activities in accordance with the law and in line with international anti-terrorism norms.

First, China has been taking measures to combat terrorism, extremism and separatism to not only safeguard the country's national security, but also protect the existing international order with the UN at its core. China has signed and/or ratified a series of international conventions on counterterrorism, and implemented all UN resolutions against terrorism. It

believes that counterterrorism operations and global cooperation in the fight against terrorism should abide by the principles of the UN Charter, respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries, and adhere to international law. More importantly, China calls on all countries to join the UN counterterrorism conventions, support the formulation of a "Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism", and help improve the international legal framework to combat terrorism.

Second, China upholds multilateralism and defends the existing world order. It advocates that global cooperation in the fight against terrorism be led by the UN, because supporting the UN's coordinating role in global counterterrorism operations will foster unity in the international community, and strengthen the global fight against terrorism. Third, China has been promoting regional and bilateral cooperation on counterterrorism. Under the Shanghai Cooperation Organization framework, China has joined regional counterterrorism conventions, including the "Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism", helped establish regional institutions to combat terrorism, and conducted joint anti-terrorism exercises with SCO member states. It has also signed bilateral treaties and

cooperation agreements on combating terrorism, separatism and extremism with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Turkmenistan and other countries.

Such efforts have enabled participating countries to share information on counterterrorism among themselves, block terrorists' financing channels, and tackle organized crimes and cyber terrorism. This regional cooperation model can help other countries to devise their own, unique way of fighting terrorism. And fourth, China has vowed to cooperate with other countries and international organizations in the fight against terrorism. It has improved its legal system, so as to better deal with terrorist activities. China has also enhanced its strategic capability to combat terrorism and strengthened its ties with the international community to fight global terrorism, in order to maintain global peace and stability.

In fact, China's counterterrorism law has detailed provisions on international intelligence and information exchange, law enforcement cooperation, joint global fund supervision, and criminal judicial assistance. Further, China's national security law emphasizes the need to deepen mutual trust, increase mutual benefit, and promote international cooperation. Even though the global fight against terrorism has yield-

ed remarkable results, many challenges remain. For instance, terrorist organizations are still causing chaos and mayhem, and committing cross-border crimes. Therefore, it is becoming increasingly difficult for the international community to fight against terrorism.

What's more, some countries think that only outfits that pose a threat to them are terrorist organizations, and turn a blind eye to the sufferings and fear of others. Some countries even resort to double standard, politicizing the global fight against terrorism and smearing other countries' legitimate counterterrorism measures. In the face of such challenges, countries have to boost their capability to counter both traditional and non-traditional forms of terrorism. They should help bolster their respective national security and join hands to peacefully resolve regional and global disputes, and help build a new security mechanism featuring dialogue rather than confrontation, partnership rather than alliance, and win-win cooperation rather than zero-sum games. Only in this way can global terrorism be eradicated. As for China, it should deepen its engagement with the international community to gain in experience and apply that knowledge to improve the counterterrorism laws, better safeguard national security and contribute to the global war on terrorism.

The China Daily

Risks and rewards

Guo Xiaoqiong & Cai Zhen

THE US-led West is bent on the "double containment" of China and Russia. With rising geopolitical tensions, the economic cooperation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is facing challenges on multiple fronts.

First, economic security is now high on the agenda of all countries. The once prevailing pursuit of "efficiency and profits" has turned into "security first" in the global layout of industry and supply chains, which are expected to become even more localized, diversified and clustered. Against such a background, security issues will be more pronounced in the SCO's economic cooperation. Second, severe disruptions in the global supply chains of energy and strategic minerals have arisen from the sanctions imposed against Russia.

At the same time, the United States has consistently coerced its allies into trying to contain China, the impact being felt equally by the industry and supply chains in China as well as by global and regional trade and investment. Third, the downward economic pressure on the SCO member countries has resulted in a lack of impetus in regional economic cooperation. Economic and trade activities involving Russia or Russian entities and individuals are usually subjected to strict sanctions that generate losses and add risks to the economic cooperation under the SCO framework. At present, with the major power competition

intensifying, the world economic order is going through profound transitions, and regional clustering is becoming ever prominent. With the SCO expanding its reach and influence in Eurasia, South Asia and the Middle East, the regional economic cooperation of the SCO is presented with challenges and opportunities alike. First, the lay-out of global industry and supply chains is increasingly being shaped by clustering and friendshoring patterns under the rising influence of regional cooperation mechanisms. Second, Russia's development in the energy, finance and technology sectors is inseparable from the outside world. Therefore, while ensuring its sustenance needs, it is striving to strengthen economic ties and cooperation with the non-Western countries and organizations such as the SCO.

Third, the Eurasian countries have strong needs for economic development, while China boasts a large market, sufficient capital and high-caliber technological conditions. The cooperation carried out under the Belt and Road Initiative, which has no political strings attached and endorses the concept of common development, is winning recognition and engagement from regional countries. Fourth, the international monetary system is going through changes, especially with a rising renminbi. Since the international currencies such as the US dollar and the international financial communication systems

such as SWIFT have been increasingly weaponized as part of the Western sanctions on Russia, countries around the world are seeking to reduce their reliance on dollars in terms of payment methods and instead turning to other safer alternatives, among which the renminbi stands out. According to the International Monetary Fund, by the end of 2022, the size of the renminbi reserves held by global central banks was \$298.4 billion, accounting for 2.7 percent of the Currency Composition of Official Foreign Exchanges and making it a top five reserve currency in the world. The internationalization of the renminbi is contributing to a reciprocal and spiraling economic cooperation among the SCO countries.

Fruitful results have been secured and laid for further cooperation in the SCO. Since its inauguration the organization has established a full set of mechanisms for economic cooperation, accomplished a number of significant connectivity infrastructure programs, and put in place a complex infrastructure network composed of railways, highways, oil pipelines and power grids. The "Shanghai Spirit" is a fundamental principle of the SCO and is where its vitality lies. The SCO has become an important platform for reaching consensus among the member countries in the face of common threats and challenges. More importantly, SCO coopera-

tion puts into practice the three global initiatives proposed by China - the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative.

Considering the differences in natural resources, economic size, development stage and development models of the SCO members, risk resistance means that member countries have different needs and roles to play in the regional cooperation. Emphasis needs to be laid on each country's economic development strategies, attention paid to their most urgent concerns and pragmatic means for cooperation explored, so that new potential for cooperation can be tapped. China's industries are highly complementary with those of the other SCO countries. Enhancing cooperation in industrial capacity will not only help ease China's structural adjustment, but also boost the industrialization and modernization of other SCO countries. All the member countries see the development of the digital economy as a long-term development goal, so China could also leverage its advantages in the digital economy and work together with other SCO countries to enhance digital cooperation. This ranges from promoting digital industrialization and industrial digitization in Eurasia, unearthing the potential of cooperation in cross-border e-commerce, smart cities, remote medical services, smart agriculture and other fields, and contributing to the development of new business formats.

Rs.2,316.57, whereas the runner-up was Pakistan Services Limited with a Rs.39.00 rise in its per share price to Rs.879.00. Attock Petroleum Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.11.88 per share closing at Rs.397.85, followed by Baluchistan Wheel Limited with a Rs.10.87 decline to close at Rs.171.13.

for the business community and FCCI along with six chambers of the Punjab requested him to introduce single window operation for the facilitation of the business community.

He said, "The provincial government worked expeditiously on this project and we were invited to attend the inaugural ceremony of the first Business Facilitation Centre in Lahore on December 04." He further said that FCCI had been making serious efforts to introduce one window system in Faisalabad for the last many years but failed to do so.

the "Close the Care Gap" theme for World Cancer Day which aims to address inequities in cancer care that disproportionately affect low- and middle-income countries like Pakistan in terms of cancer deaths. Together, we can close this gap by strengthening our cancer diagnostic and treatment infrastructure to help save precious lives.

Meanwhile two more ships MSC Roma and Saimaisma with containers and LNG also arrived at outer anchorage of the port during last 24 hours. A total of 10 ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them, two ships, MSC Silva and Encore left the port on Tuesday morning and four more ships, ECE Nur Bayraktar, World Crest, Nord Allegro and Sino Star are expected to sail on today afternoon.

ISLAMABAD: Labourers carrying onion bags after unloading from delivery truck at Vegetable Market in Federal Capital.

first two quarters of the current financial year went down by 19.48 per cent and recorded \$3.957 billion as compared to the imports of \$4.914 billion during the same period of last year.

It may be recalled here that during the period under review, the exports increased by 5.17 per cent to \$14.981 billion compared to the exports of \$14.244 billion during the corresponding period of last year, according to the latest PBS data.

On the other hand, the imports narrowed by 16.28 per cent and were recorded at \$26.129 billion compared to \$31.209 billion last year.

textile enterprises participated and signed multi-million-dollar contracts at the Expo Centre. Exports of textiles and leather were expected to increase further in the coming years. "Exports of cotton trousers for men or boys (community code 61034200) from Pakistan to China reached \$16.22 million whereas those for women or girls (community code 62046200) crossed \$5.56 million from January-December of 2023," Qadir mentioned.

The Bank on consolidated basis is operating the 2nd largest network of more than 1,600 branches in Pakistan. The Bank posted its highest ever Consolidated Profit Before Tax of Rs. 137.5 Billion (+83%) for the year 2023, with its deposit book crossing the Rs. 2 Trln mark as at December 31, 2023. The Bank remains one of the prime stocks traded in the Pakistani equity market and ranks amongst the highest capitalized banks in the industry.

In the Court of Samina
Sehar Civil Judge XIII
Bannu. Suit
No.02/12(2) Institution
No.06.12.2023 Next date of
hearing 19-02-2024 case
title: Mst. Rabia Bibi VS
Hazrat Bilal Notice To
Hazrat Bilal Son
Muhammad Ismail Khan
R/o Kotka Bahadar sher
Mamish khel Tehsil &
District Bannu. Presently
Abroad. Whereas in the
above case titled the service
of above defendant (s) is not
possible through ordinary
means, therefore you defend-
ant(s) are informed
through this publication that
on 19-02-2024 at 8.00 AM.
You have to appear before
this court either personally
or through attorney or
through counsel to pursue
the suit noted above, other-
wise, Ex-parte proceeding
will be initiated against you.

[illegible]



In brief

Kabaddi tournament

FAISALABAD (APP): A Kabaddi tournament was played in collaboration with FCCI standing committee for sports and divisional kabaddi association here on Tuesday. A team of Chak 209/R-B club won the event, Pak Watan club secured second position, Ali Shahanshah club third and Randhawa club got fourth position. The winner was awarded with trophies and cash prize of Rs 30,000, second Rs 25,000, third Rs 15,000 and fourth Rs 10,000. Later, the audience including players and officials made hand-chain to express solidarity with their Kashmiri brethren and chanted slogans in their favour.

Marsh captains Australia T20

SYDNEY (Reuters): Mitchell Marsh looks set to lead Australia into this year's Twenty20 World Cup after being named captain of a full-strength squad for a three-match series in New Zealand this month, the team's last before June's global showpiece. Aaron Finch, who led Australia to their first T20 World Cup triumph in 2021, retired as captain in the shortest format a year ago but Cricket Australia have yet to formally anoint his successor. Test and one-day skipper Pat Cummins is one of the big-name players returning to the squad after being rested for the upcoming home series against West Indies but Marsh will retain the captaincy for the matches in Auckland and Wellington. First-choice batsmen Travis Head and Steve Smith and left-arm paceman Mitchell Starc return along with Cummins in the 15-man squad for the series, which begins at Wellington Stadium on Feb. 21 before two matches at Auckland's Eden Park. "The next six games will provide us the opportunity to start shaping what we think our World Cup squad will look like and potential roles within that," head selector George Bailey said in a news release. "We will also fully utilise the opportunity to monitor and watch the performances of the Australian players in the (Indian Premier League) immediately preceding the World Cup." Matt Short, one of the batters hoping to replace Finch at the top of the order, was included in the squad despite a low-grade hamstring injury that has ruled him out of the West Indies series. Pace bowler Nathan Ellis is recovering from a rib injury and Spencer Johnson is on standby to replace him in the squad for the West Indies series should he need more time to be ready for the trip to New Zealand. Cricket Australia said. Australia take on West Indies in a three-match T20 series starting in Hobart on Friday as part of their preparations for the June 1-29 World Cup in the Caribbean and United States.

Canada hockey gang rape case

LONDON (AFP): Canadian police confirmed Monday charges against five current and former NHL players over an alleged 2018 gang rape, and apologized for the six years it took to investigate the accusations. The players, who were part of Canada's junior national ice hockey team at the time, each face one count of sexual assault. Those charged are Michael McLeod and Cal Foote of the New Jersey Devils; Calgary Flames forward Dillon Dube; Philadelphia Flyers goaltender Carter Hart; and Alex Formenton, formerly of the Ottawa Senators who now plays in Switzerland.

UNHCR, Peshawar Zalmi announce partnership ahead of PSL Season 9



F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: As the Pakistan Super League Season 9 starts from 17 February, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, has announced a partnership with Peshawar Zalmi to promote the refugee cause through cricket in Pakistan.

Peshawar Zalmi is the leading franchise of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) cricket championship, which has been taking place since 2015.

As part of the partnership, Peshawar Zalmi and UNHCR will work together to highlight refugee issues during one of the most popular cricketing contests. Peshawar Zalmi will showcase the emblem of UNHCR on their jerseys,

marking a visible commitment to the cause.

The Chief Operating Officer, of Peshawar Zalmi, Mr. Mian Abbas and cricketer Mr. Mohammad Harris, presented the official jersey of Peshawar Zalmi to UNHCR's Representative in Pakistan, Ms. Philippa Candler, in Islamabad.

On behalf of Mr. Javed Afridi, owner of the Peshawar Zalmi, Mian Abbas said that war and conflict forced millions of people to become refugees worldwide adding that Peshawar Zalmi and UNHCR will jointly partner to run an awareness campaign during the Pakistan Super League.

"Teaming up with humanitarian organization such as UNHCR will allow

us to use our platform to highlight global challenges and help mobilize our people for a greater humanitarian impact," he said quoting Javed Afridi.

Ms. Candler commended Peshawar Zalmi's commitment to the refugee cause. "In featuring UNHCR's logo on Peshawar Zalmi's jersey, they are demonstrating their dedication to raising awareness and supporting those in need."

"Sports build bridges, transcend borders and cultures and foster a greater understanding of humanitarian issues," she said. We wish good luck to Peshawar Zalmi during Season 9," she added.

Pakistan has remained a generous refugee host for more than four decades.

Second century for Williamson as New Zealand extend lead past 500

MOUNT MAUNGANUI (AFP/APP): Kane Williamson crafted his second century of the match Tuesday as New Zealand took complete command of the first Test on day three against understrength South Africa.

Run machine Williamson was out for a rapid 109 as the home side reached 179-4 in their second innings at Mount Maunganui, extending their overall lead to 528 runs by stumps.

Daryl Mitchell was at the crease on 11 and Tom Blundell on five, with the Black Caps looking to declare early on Wednesday with South Africa facing a mammoth target on a deteriorating Bay Oval pitch.

The depleted Proteas were dismissed for 162 soon before tea in response to New Zealand's first innings 511. The follow-on, wasn't enforced, allowing the world's top-ranked batsman Williamson to craft another big score to follow his 118 in the first innings.

It was the former skipper's 31st Test century but the first time he has reached three figures twice in the same match. The 34-year-old played with aggression from the outset,

striking 12 fours and a six in a 132-ball stay that signalled New Zealand's intent before he was stumped off the bowling of Proteas captain Neil Brand.

New Zealand coach Stead said Williamson's prolific form was "fantastic" for his team-mates, noting the role he played as a support act when Rachin Ravindra posted a maiden double century in the first innings.

"Kane's been an incredible player for us and he keeps churning out the runs," Stead said.

"He's a tired lad in their now, he'll be getting a bit of treatment tonight I'd imagine, but he's just fantastic for the team."

Stead wouldn't say if New Zealand will declare overnight, preferring to "keep them guessing".

He explained the decision not to enforce the follow-on, deeming the fitness of his bowling attack a priority ahead of next week's second Test, followed by two Tests against Australia.

"We just felt this is the first of four Tests in a pretty quick period of time for us and we wanted to make sure our bowlers had an element of freshness to them." As was the case in

the first innings, Williamson survived a dropped catch in the outfield, with Edward Moore again the culprit when he was on 61.

Moore responded in the following over by catching Devon Conway for 29 off Brand's spin bowling, noting a partnership of 92 with Williamson after opener Tom Latham fell cheaply.

The second-string nature of South Africa's side was exposed when they lost their last six wickets for 82 runs on Tuesday.

The top score was 45 from Keegan Petersen who, in his 13th Test, is the most experienced batsman in the squad after most first-choice players remained behind to compete in a domestic Twenty20 competition.

Petersen lost his overnight partner David Bedingham for 32 when trying to hook seamer Matt Henry, before Ruan de Swardt followed for a second-ball duck in the same over. Wicketkeeper Clyde Fortuin, one of six Proteas debutants, departed for nine just before the tourists went to lunch at 129-7.

Henry took 3-31 and Mitchell Santner capitalised on spin-friendly conditions to finish with 3-34.

Hockey match to mark Kashmir Day played

FAISALABAD (APP): Commissioner Eleven on Tuesday won the hockey match by defeating Deputy Commissioner Eleven by 2-1 goals.

The hockey match organized by district sports department was played to mark the Kashmir Solidarity Day here at Hockey Stadium. Later, trophies were given to both teams. Divisional Sports Officer Tariq Nazir, District Sports Officer Sajida Latif and others were also present. They paid tribute to the Kashmiri brethren for their struggle for self-determination.

Azam demands consistent chances for Pakistan

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Wicketkeeper batter Azam Khan on Tuesday, expressed his disappointment over being given inconsistent chances to prove his mettle in the international circuit.

Azam talked about the inconsistencies in his selection in the Pakistan team during an interview with the International League T20 franchise Desert Vipers. The 25-year-old lamented on being made to play a handful of fixtures instead of a full series.

"I have always understood that when I play league cricket, I get a complete opportunity because they know I can win them games, so they are calling me here," stated Azam. "That means either you are putting doubts in my mind that I am not good at this level, then it's okay, then I will find my own way."

"In the last 4 years, I have made a comeback three times and I have never played a full series, so it hurts me a little that either you give me the full series or leave me out altogether, or don't hang me in the middle, so I regret this thing." Azam Khan further acknowledged that he feels to be lacking something while playing for Pakistan.

"It is obvious that I play all my cricket with a full mindset, and when someone comes and puts doubts in it, then I get a little frustrated, because when I play with foreign coaches, they never make me feel like I am lacking something, but yes, when I play for the Pakistan team, I feel like I am lacking something because when I watch my batting, my innings, then I say that I am not less than any player."

It is worth mentioning here that Azam Khan recently made his comeback into the national team for the five-match away series against New Zealand in January. The wicketkeeper batter featured in the first three T20Is and failed to make an impact as he could manage modest scores of 10, 2 and 10 respectively.

He has thus far represented Pakistan in eight matches, accumulating a mere 29 runs at a dismal average of 4.83.

Jordan stun South Korea to reach Asian Cup final for first time

DOHA (AFP): Jordan powered past Son Heung-min's South Korea 2-0 on Tuesday to reach their first Asian Cup final and a showdown with Iran or hosts and holders Qatar.

Playing in the semi-finals for the first time and ranked 64 places lower, Jordan were full value for their victory over Jurgen Klinsmann's shell-shocked side. South Korea's talisman Son endured a frustrating night and his country's wait for a first Asian Cup since 1960 goes on.

Jordan had more of the chances and deservedly went ahead soon after the break, Yazan Al-Naimat scoring his third goal of the tournament after South Korea gave the ball away cheaply. They had been in a losing position in four of their matches in Qatar, but there was no way back this time for the Koreans when Mousa Al-Tamari sliced his way through the South Korean defence 13 minutes later.

South Korea simply could not handle the pace and power of the attacking duo of Naimat and Tamari. Son stood with his hands on his hips at the final whistle in disbelief. Jordan fans were in the majority among the crowd of 43,000 at Ahmad bin Ali Stadium, a 2022 World Cup venue, and jeered and whistled loudly whenever South Korea had the ball.

Jordan were the underdogs -- despite the teams drawing 2-2 in the group phase -- but they shaded an entertaining first half in which they racked up 12 attempts at goal to South Korea's four. On 17 minutes South Korean goalkeeper Jo Hyeon-woo was forced into a decent save from Noor Al-Rawabdeh after good work from Montpellier's Tamari.

Jo kept out a fierce drive from Naimat after the South Korean defence opened up, before Tamari blazed over the bar.

On the half-hour referee Mohammed Abdulla Hassan from the UAE awarded Klinsmann's side a penalty after a collision in the Jordan box between Seol Young-woo and Yazan

over three days starting Wednesday at their headquarters in Lausanne.

"The parties, witnesses and experts will attend the hearing both in person and remotely, including Ms Halep who will be present in person," CAS said.

Halep has protested her innocence and refused to accept the ITIA decision which will keep her from playing professional tennis again until October 6, 2026.

The winner of the 2018 French Open and 2019 Wimbledon singles titles says she wants to "clear her name" and has claimed experts found she had accidentally taken a contaminated supplement.

But the ITIA said that while the tribunal accepted

Al-Arab, but changed his mind after consulting the pitchside monitor.

Lee Jae-sung pinged a header onto the post -- South Korea's first proper chance -- then Naimat salomoned his way through three weak Korean challenges before drawing a close-range stop from Jo.

Hwang In-beom skied a golden chance way over the bar with just the goalkeeper to beat on the stroke of half time.

Skipper and Tottenham ace Son, who scored the extra-time winner over Australia in the quarter-finals, had yet to stamp his authority on the semi-final and his side were behind on 53 minutes.

Park Yong-woo gave the ball away, Tamari ran towards goal and slipped in Naimat, who popped a cool finish over the advancing Jo. South Korea could not cope with the rampaging duo and on 66 minutes Tamari drove to the edge of the box before unloading past an exposed Jo.

Iran and Qatar play on Wednesday for the other spot in Saturday's final.

Halep to appear before CAS to appeal four-year doping ban

Lausanne (AFP) -- Former world number one Simona Halep will appear before a three-day hearing of the Court of Arbitration for Sport starting on Wednesday to appeal her four-year doping ban, CAS confirmed.

The 32-year-old Romanian was suspended last September by the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) after two separate doping infractions.

The two-time Grand Slam singles champion tested positive for roxadustat after the US Open in 2022 and was charged with a separate second anti-doping breach last year relating to irregularities in her athlete biological passport.

On Tuesday, CAS said the hearing will take place

over three days starting Wednesday at their headquarters in Lausanne.

"The parties, witnesses and experts will attend the hearing both in person and remotely, including Ms Halep who will be present in person," CAS said.

Halep has protested her innocence and refused to accept the ITIA decision which will keep her from playing professional tennis again until October 6, 2026.

The winner of the 2018 French Open and 2019 Wimbledon singles titles says she wants to "clear her name" and has claimed experts found she had accidentally taken a contaminated supplement.

But the ITIA said that while the tribunal accepted

Halep had taken a contaminated supplement, they also "determined the volume the player ingested could not have resulted in the concentration of roxadustat found in the positive sample".

Roxadustat is a substance that can be used legitimately to treat anaemia.

But it is also on the World Anti-Doping Agency banned list as it is considered a blood-doping agent, which increases haemoglobin and the production of red blood cells.

The biological passport system is designed for the long-term monitoring of an athlete's blood indicators with the aim of identifying irregularities that could indicate doping.



BENONI: Indian players celebrate their victory over South Africa while South African players show disappointment during the ICC U19 Men's World Cup 2024, Semi Final match between India and South Africa.

India come from behind to reach U19 WC final at South Africa's disposal

BENONI (Agencies): Skipper Uday Saharan and Sachin Das recovered India with gritty half-centuries to edge hosts South Africa by three wickets to reach the ICC U19 Men's Cricket World Cup final.

Put into bat first, South Africa registered a decent total of 244/7 on the board, courtesy of brilliant half-centuries by Lhuan-dre Pretorius and Richard Seletswane.

The home side had a shaky start to their innings as they lost Steve Stolk (14) and David Teeger (0) inside the batting powerplay with just 46 runs on the board.

But Seletswane joined Pretorius in the middle and anchored the innings with a gutsy third-wicket partnership. The crucial stand yielded 72 runs before the opening batter finally walked back in the 31st over.

Pretorius remained the top-scorer for South Africa with 76 off 102 deliveries, laced up with six boundaries and three sixes.

Meanwhile, Seletswane stood his ground firm and

put together notable partnerships with Oliver Whitehead (22) and skipper Juan James (24) before finally perishing in the 47th over. He smashed four boundaries and two sixes on his way to a 100-ball 64.

Tristan Luus then bolstered South Africa's total at the backend with a brisk 23-run cameo which came off just 12 deliveries.

Chasing 245 to make their way into the U19 World Cup final, India accumulated 248 for the loss of eight wickets and seven balls to spare. The former champions had a disastrous start to the pursuit as they were in all sorts of trouble with the scoreboard reading 32/4 in 11.2 overs.

But an astounding fifth-wicket partnership between skipper Uday Saharan and Sachin Dhas turned the game on its head. The duo batted sensibly amid their reviving stand which spanned for more than 30 overs to add 171 runs to the total.

Dhas, who was the core aggressor of the match-

defining stand, had an agonizing end to his brave knock as he fell just four shy of his well-deserved century. He remained the top-scorer for India with 96 off 95 deliveries, hitting 11 boundaries and a six.

Meanwhile, skipper Saharan carried his bat till the penultimate over and walked back after leaving his side just one run within the victory. He scored 81 off 124 deliveries with the help of six boundaries.

For South Africa, Kwena Maphaka and Tristan Luus bagged three wickets each. It is worth mentioning here that India will now take on either Pakistan or Australia in the U19 World Cup final on Sunday.

Zimbabwe to host India for five T20Is after T20 WC

HARARE: Zimbabwe will host India for a five-match T20I series in July, a week after the conclusion of the T20 World Cup in the West Indies and the USA. All

five games will be played in Harare, from July 6 to 14. Four of the five T20Is will be day games, starting at 1pm local time. The third T20I, the only night match, will begin at 6pm. "We are absolutely thrilled to be hosting India for a T20I series in July in what will be our biggest international attraction at home this year," Zimbabwe Cricket chairman Tavengwa Mukhulani said in a press release. "The significance and magnitude of this tour cannot be over-emphasised, especially as it is coming at a time we are working round the clock to re-establish ourselves as a force to reckon with at the highest level of the game." India last toured Zimbabwe for three ODIs in August 2022, when they won 3-0. Since then, the two sides have met only once across formats, at the T20 World Cup in Australia later that year. Overall, the two teams have played eight T20Is each other, with India winning six of them.

Nadal and Djokovic set for new Saudi exhibition event

RIYADH (Agencies): Saudi Arabia will host a new elite tennis exhibition featuring Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal and three other Grand Slam winners in October.

The Six Kings Slam event will form part of the Saudi cultural and entertainment festival Riyadh Season.

Major winners Carlos Alcaraz, Daniil Medvedev and Jannik Sinner will also line up, as well as Holger Rune.

The event will take place during the ATP season, which already has a full schedule that month.

Exhibition events are usually played during breaks in the ATP season or after it has finished but in October players are already due to be involved in Masters 1000 tournaments in Shanghai and Paris.

Spaniard Nadal, who signed up as an ambassador for the Saudi Arabian Tennis Federation last month, said he was look-



ing forward to the event.

"After some other tennis players have done so, I am very excited to play for the first time in Riyadh," the 22-time Grand Slam champion said.

Saudi Arabia already hosts the season-ending Next Gen ATP Finals for the leading men's under-21 players in Jeddah and there has been extensive debate over the country potentially hosting the women's WTA Finals.

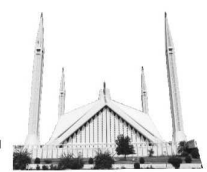
Recently, tennis greats Chris Evert and Martina Navratilova wrote an opin-

ion piece outlining their opposition to the women's season-ending event being staged there.

Critics of Saudi Arabia have accused the oil-rich kingdom of using its wealth to invest in sports in a bid to improve its image - known as 'sports-washing'.

It follows recent heavy investment in golf, Formula 1, football and boxing in particular.

Campaigning organisations remain critical of Saudi Arabia's record on human rights and equality.



In brief

ANF recovers 724 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 11 operations recovered over 724 kg drugs and arrested nine accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Tuesday. He informed that 746 grams hashish was recovered from a passenger going to Sharjah from Islamabad Airport. 91 heroin-filled capsules were recovered from a passenger going to Dubai from Islamabad Airport. 159 grams hashish was recovered from two passengers going to China at Karachi Airport. 500 grams Ice was recovered from a parcel at Sial Air Cargo Office, Sialkot. 295 kg opium and 7 kg hashish were recovered from Nokundi Chagai area. 97 kg hashish was recovered from Orakzai area while 120 kg hashish and 72 kg opium were recovered from Basharat Road Peshawar and an accused was arrested during the operation. 65 kg hashish and 8 kg ice recovered from 2 suspects near Lakpas Toll Plaza Quetta. 27 kg hashish and 26 kg prohibited material were recovered near Chakri Toll Plaza, Rawalpindi. 6 kg hashish was recovered from two suspects in two different operations from M-1 Motorway Islamabad. Separate cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused while further investigations are under process.

CTP issue traffic plan

RAWALPINDI (APP): To maintain traffic flow, City Traffic Police (CTP) Rawalpindi has issued a traffic plan regarding general election to be held February 8, 2024. No parking will be allowed within 400 meters of polling stations, Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Taimoor Khan said in a news release here on Tuesday. He further said that a total 17 lifters will also be available at different locations whereas 11 DSPs, 227 Inspectors, 755 Wardens and 243 Traffic Assistants, Senior Traffic Assistants will also perform duties on election Day. CTO directed the circle officers and wardens to keep a close eye on suspicious persons, abandoned items along with traffic duty. The effective patrolling system will be ensured on important highways to facilitate the motorists and voters. Citizens can call police helpline 15 or 051-9293038 any guidance. An emergency squad has also been formed to maintain the flow of traffic which will be active all the time in case of any emergency, he added.

“Khoon Ki Wadi” staged at PAC

RAWALPINDI (APP): A drama titled “Khoon Ki Wadi” based on the atrocities committed by the Indian forces on Kashmiri people was presented at the Punjab Arts Council (PAC) in connection with Kashmir Solidarity Day. The chief guest of the play was President Board of Management PAC Rawalpindi Saqib Rafiq. The play was written by Aamir Zaryab while the direction had been given by Muanwar Afridi. Arshad Khan, Karim Khan, Shazia Sheikh, Rabia Shah, Yaqub Sheikh, Kashif Raza, Hamid, Parvez Malik, Saim and others were included in the cast of the play. The artists portrayed the atrocities of Occupied Kashmir in the best way in the stage drama. Speaking on the occasion Chief guest Saqib Rafiq said that human rights violations committed by India in Occupied Kashmir was unprecedented in history.



ISLAMABAD: People enjoying mechanized swing at Lake View Park in Federal Capital.

Gohar Ejaz pledges to ensure robust security for upcoming Polls-2024

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Interior Minister, Dr. Gohar Ejaz, on Tuesday expressed his commitment to ensure robust security for upcoming general elections scheduled to be held on February 8.

Speaking at a joint press conference, he outlined the government's comprehensive preparations in place for the upcoming elections.

The minister was flanked by Caretaker Information Minister Murtaza Solangi, and Federal Secretary for Interior, Aftab Akbar Durrani.

Highlighting the security measures, Dr. Ejaz assured that there would be no compromise on maintaining law and order during the elections.

Caretaker Interior Minister, Dr. Gohar Ejaz underscored the collaboration between security

agencies and the administration to prevent any unlawful interference.

Dr Ejaz emphasized the presence of trained commandos in Balochistan and the support of the armed forces in ensuring the safety of the electoral process.

Providing an overview of the election preparations, the interior minister shared that out of 90,777 polling stations across the country, 44,000 were declared normal, 29,985 deemed sensitive, and 16,766 labeled as highly sensitive.

He reassured the public that security would be deployed in three levels, with 7 to 8 law enforcers stationed at each polling station. Despite concerns and challenges, Dr. Ejaz expressed hope for a "transparent", and peaceful election.

Caretaker Interior Minister, Dr. Gohar Ejaz urged the pub-

lic to exercise their right to vote with confidence, acknowledging the dedication of the 511,000-strong police force guarding the polling stations. The minister recounted his visits to Karachi and Balochistan, addressing specific challenges in each region. In Sindh, he noted the absence of enmity between political parties, while in Balochistan, he highlighted the disruptive actions of terrorists tarnishing Pakistan's image.

Dispelling rumors surrounding the elections on February 8, Dr. Ejaz clarified that, as of now, no decision had been made to shut down mobile or internet services.

However, Caretaker Interior Minister, Dr. Gohar Ejaz emphasized that, if necessary, considerations would be made based on security requests from specific districts or provinces.

26 outlaws netted, drugs, weapons recovered

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police (ICP) apprehended 26 outlaws including twelve professional beggars from different areas of the city during the last 24 hours and recovered drugs and weapons from their possession. According to an ICP spokesperson, following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPO) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police has intensified its crackdown against the criminal elements to eliminate crime from the city.

Meanwhile, the Karachi Company police team arrested an accused namely Sagar and recovered 50 liquor bottles from his possession. The Golra police team arrested an accused namely Nasir Ali and recovered one 30 bore pistol with ammunition from his possession.

Likewise, the Sangjani Police team arrested two accused namely Wali Muhammad and Muhammad Irfan and recovered 875 gram of heroin from their possession. Likewise, the Shams Colony police team arrested an accused namely Nnamokoejike and recovered 15 bottles of liquor from his possession. The Khanna police team arrested an accused namely Rehman Ullah and recovered one 30-bore pistol from his possession.

Following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPO) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city. Following these directions, the Anti Robbery and Dacoity Unit (ARDU) police team used technical and human resources and succeeded in apprehending a wanted member of a thief gang involved in numerous theft activities. The accused was identified as Adnan Nawaz. Police team also recovered stolen gold ornaments, valuables and cash from his possession. The case was registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway.

ICCPO Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan directed all senior officials for effective crackdown against the accused involved in criminal activities and ensured the safety of lives and property of citizens on priority basis.

ICP conducts flag march to maintain peace during elections

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Capital Police (ICP) and other law enforcement agencies on Tuesday conducted a joint flag march in the city to maintain peace and tranquillity in the city during the general election of 2024. The flag march started from three different areas of the city and culminated at the same point after passing through various areas of the capital city.

In line with the special direction of the Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPO) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the ICP took comprehensive security arrangements for the election 2024, an official statement from the police said.

The ICCPO emphasized that the Islamabad Capital Police are taking all possible steps to maintain peace in the city adding that all forces are all time alert to tackle any untoward incident. He also appealed to the citizens to cooperate with police during checking

and inform police about any suspicious activity around them through “Pucar-15” or “ICT-15”. According to the statement, security has been enhanced at all entry and exit points while the Dolphin squad will patrol in different areas of the city. Senior police officers have been directed to remain present in their concerned areas and check the duty points according to the security point of view.

The crackdown against one-wheelers, tinted glasses, pillion riding, without number plates vehicles and motorcycles is underway, the statement said.

ICP busted thief gang: Islamabad Capital Police (ICP) Anti Robbery and Dacoity Unit (ARDU) police team arrested a wanted member of a thief gang involved in numerous theft activities and recovered stolen gold ornaments, valuables and cash from his possession. Spokesperson of Islamabad Police said on Tuesday that

PTA DG on ‘Safer Internet Day’ stresses public awareness to protect information on digital accounts

ISLAMABAD (APP): Director General of the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), Ahmed Shamim Pirzada Tuesday on 'Safer Internet' Day emphasized to create media awareness among the general public for the responsible and safe use of social media platforms.

Talking to the PTV news, he said that while acknowledging the digital impact on children, the PTA is dedicated to ensuring a safer internet that meets their educational needs and promotes positive online interactions, adding that the public urged to refrain from clicking on links from unknown numbers as well as unknown senders. “Keeping the digital safe is a shared responsibility, and all the stakeholders need to come together to keep the dialogue alive on creating a safer space for children,” he added.

To prevent the propagation of false information via phoney accounts, PTA has strictly instructed social media sites and companies to tighten the account verification procedure, he added.

He said that PTA has also asked to open

their separate offices to bring these companies under law, adding, PTA also providing comprehensive educational resources and guides to users, emphasizing best practices for securing their accounts, recognizing phishing attempts, and protecting personal information.

He said PTA was ensuring strict adherence to regulatory standards and compliance requirements related to data protection, to mitigate the risk of financial crimes and illicit activities. Replying to a question, he said that it is our collective responsibility to create a secure and protective digital space, allowing Pakistani users to continue their online activities in a safer environment.

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.

To another question, he said that PTA is dedicated to ensure a safer internet that meets their educational needs and promotes positive online interactions.

Dr Jamal inaugurates renovation work of BBH nursing college

RAWALPINDI (APP): Caretaker Provincial Minister for Primary and Secondary Health, Punjab Dr Jamal Nasir on Tuesday said that Rs 65 million would be spent on the renovation of the Nursing Hostel while revamping the College of Nursing would be completed at the cost of Rs 40 mln.

He expressed these views while inaugurating the renovation of the Nursing Hostel and College of Nursing at Benazir Bhutto Hospital (BBH).

Dr Jamal said that the College of Nursing would be completed in a month while the renovation work of Nursing Hostel would be completed in April.

Later, the provincial minister visited Holy Family Hospital (HFH) along with Commissioner Rawalpindi Liaquat Ali Chatha.

He said that after the completion of the revamping and renovation work of the hospital, immediate steps were being taken to activate the PEADS and Gynecology wards of the HFH at the earliest. The minister informed that as many as 100 hospitals had been renovated across the Punjab province.

He said that steps were also being taken to provide quality health facilities to the people as well as for the welfare of the medical staff.

31 candidates including 20 independents contesting for NA-56, Rawalpindi-V

RAWALPINDI (APP): As many as 31 candidates including 20 independents are contesting general elections for National Assembly Constituency No. NA-56, Rawalpindi-V, while a total of 523,733 registered voters including 272,459 males and 251,274 females will use their right to franchise on the election day.

Muhammad Hanif Abbasi, candidate of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Sumaira Gul, Pakistan Peoples Party, Parliamentarians, Imran Shafique, Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan, Muhammad Zia Ur Rehman Amazai, Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam Pakistan, Sajjad Akbar Abbasi, Tehreek Labbaik Pakistan, Sharjeel Mir, Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party and Shehryar Riaz are an independent candidate are in the run. According to details, all the arrangements had been finalized by the administration for the general elections and the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had also announced a polling scheme for the constituency, NA-56.

Rawalpindi district administration on the directives of Commissioner, Rawalpindi Division, Liaquat Ali Chhatta had finalized administrative measures including security arrangements to maintain law and order. As many as 371 polling stations including 188 male, 181 female and two combined will be set up in the constituency to facilitate the voters.

There will be a total of 940 polling booths including 480 for male and 460

for female voters in Rawalpindi-V, NA-56 constituency. Under the polling scheme of NA-56, out of a total of 3,562 staff, there are 371 presiding officers with 1880 assistant presiding officers while 940 polling officers and 371 assistants will also perform their duties on the election day. The main areas under NA-56, Rawalpindi-V constituency are Quaidabad, Pirwadhai, Fouji Colony, Mehr Colony, Awan Colony, Bangash Colony, Zia ul Haq Colony, Islam Pura, Khyabana-e-Sir Syed, Mohanpura, Bagh Sardaran, Gulshanabad, Dhoke Hassu, Rattaamral, Milad Nagar, Babu Lal Hussain Road, Waris Khan, Chitian Hattian, Raja Bazar, Satellite Town, Saddiqui Chowk, New Katarian, Phagwari, Saidpur, Eidgah, Asghar Mall, Banni and others.

According to a Commissioner's office spokesman, the Commissioner had directed the authorities concerned to complete all the arrangements for the general elections as per the code of conduct issued by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

Liaquat Ali Chhatta had also ordered that the code of conduct issued by ECP should be implemented in letter and spirit, he said adding, that all possible facilities should be provided to the voters and all the activities should strictly be monitored. Special security arrangements were also being finalized for the sen-

sitive polling stations, he added. Chief Secretary Punjab, Zahid Akhtar Zaman during a visit to Rawalpindi division here the other day directed the authorities concerned to finalize the best possible arrangements for the general elections 2024, scheduled to be held on February 8. The Chief Secretary during the visit reviewed all the preparations including security being finalized for the general elections.

The Chief Secretary also visited the special control rooms established for the elections and the sensitive polling stations of Rawalpindi. The Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Liaquat Ali Chhatta briefed the Chief Secretary about all the arrangements.

All the arrangements including security had been completed in a timely and efficient manner, he added.

The number of registered voters in Rawalpindi Division is approximately 7.5 million, the Chief Secretary was briefed and informed that 5,490 polling stations were established across the division, for which 3,604 buildings were being used. Additional arrangements for the security of the polling stations had been made while the control rooms had also been set up. Zahid Akhtar Zaman instructed that every possible step should be taken to implement the code of conduct, issued by the Election Commission of Pakistan to conduct free, fair and transparent elections.

PR putting maximum efforts retrieve 13,972 acres land

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways has accelerated the efforts to retrieve the major portion of around 13,972 acres of land worth billions of rupees found under the illegal occupation of private individuals and different government departments across the country.

“Around 5,809 acres were occupied in Punjab, 1,181 acres are under encroachment in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 5,948 acres in Sindh and 1,034 acres land occupied in Balochistan,” an official in the Ministry told APP.

He said the category of land under illegal occupations included commercial, residential, agricultural and various persons or departments.

Giving details of the land, the official said that around 769 acres were commercial in all the provinces, 3,309 residential, 5,512 acres agricultural and 4382 were under encroachment of various persons or depart-

ments. The official said the department had also decided to accelerate its ongoing anti-encroachment operation against land grabbers across the country to recoup its land from different individuals, groups, and even business organizations which were using it for residential, commercial and agriculture purposes for decades.

“The joint procedure orders have been issued to all Divisional Superintendents of Pakistan Railways to retrieve the railway land from encroachers,” the official added.

Accordingly, he said the anti-encroachment operations for retrieval of encroached Railway land all over the Railway network are being initiated by the concerned divisions and notices are issued to encroachers under the Possession Ordinance 1965 for vacation of Railway land/structure within 14 days.

The official said that Pakistan Railway Police, District

Administration and law enforcement agencies are informed of necessary assistance in anti-encroachment operations. To further control and restrict new encroachments, he said the responsibilities defined for Railway officers within Railway Station premises, Station Master concerned, within/around the colony premises, inspector of works and Railway Police. “The anti-encroachment schedules, on a three-month basis, are being prepared and sent to all concerned in line with the joint procedure order,” he said adding that the operation will be launched with the assistance of Railway Police and district administrations of the relevant provincial governments.

The official said PR owned 167,690 acres of land across the country, of which 90,326-acre was in Punjab, 39,428-acre in Sindh, 28,228-acre in Balochistan, and 9,708-acre in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.



RAWALPINDI: A view of banners of candidates displayed at Committee Chowk in connection with upcoming General Election 2024.

Torkham porters issued special cards

PESHAWAR (Pajhwok): The government of Pakistan has issued special cards to hundreds of porters and daily-wagers in Torkham. More than 300 porters and workers have received the cards, helping them resume their work after several months of suspension as a result of Pakistan's harsh visa policy. The strict visa regime had rendered jobless hundreds of workers, who carried travellers' belongings across the Torkham gate, according to Dawn.

21m lack access to clean water

KABUL (TOLOnews): The National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) in a joint press conference with the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) said that almost 21 million people in Afghanistan don't have access to drinking water due to the climate changes. The deputy of NEPA, Abdul Salam Haqani, said that climate change has destroyed half of the three percent of forested lands in the country.

Five organizations warn of climate change effects in Afghanistan



KABUL (Khaama Press): During this winter in Afghanistan, as rainfall and snowfall remain scarce, five international organizations, including the World Food Program and the World Health Organization, have issued warnings about climate change and the deteriorating climate conditions in the country. These statements were made in a joint statement on Monday, February 5th, by Save the Children

Organization, the World Vision International, the World Food Program, the World Health Organization, and the Islamic Relief Worldwide Organization. In the joint statement of these organizations, it is mentioned that currently, 25 provinces in Afghanistan are facing drought conditions. The International Relief Organizations' statement further elaborates: "From October 1, 2023, to

January 15, 2024, Afghanistan has experienced an average of 45% to 60% of the rainfall volume of previous years. Experts also predict that above-average temperatures are very likely between February and April 2024." Meanwhile, the International Child Protection Organization continues to warn that approximately 7.8 million children in Afghanistan do not have enough food, and

if the drought intensifies and food resources become insufficient, these children will be at risk. Furthermore, in the statement of these organizations, it is pointed out that the lack of rain also creates favourable conditions for the spread of various diseases. It is worth noting that the organizations emphasize that "four million pregnant or lactating women and children under five are currently suffering from severe malnutrition." It was announced yesterday by the Ministry of Higher Education and the National Environmental Protection Agency of Afghanistan during a joint meeting that an international climate change conference will be held at Nangarhar University next week. Previously, the United Nations had declared that Afghanistan experienced its worst drought in the past 30 years. Afghanistan has been repeatedly and continuously facing drought in recent decades.

UK provides \$36.5 million in aid to Afghanistan

KABUL (Ariana News): The United Nations World Food Program announced Monday that the UK and Northern Ireland have donated £28.7 million (\$36.5 million) to Afghanistan through the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. The funding will support the WFP's emergency response for food-insecure families in Afghanistan and provide nutrition for malnourished children and pregnant or breastfeeding women. UK Minister of State for the Middle East, South Asia and the UN, Tariq Ahmad, said the aid would help more than two million people across Afghanistan during the winter. "This assistance is aimed at some of the most vulnerable, including widows, families led by women or children, and people with disabilities," he said. The donation will purchase 13,000 metric tons of wheat flour, vegetable oil, pulses, and salt,



aiding over 1 million people for a month. Additionally, up to 1 million individuals will receive cash-based transfers to meet their food needs this winter. WFP has already used the funds to stockpile 7,000 metric tons of food

in remote areas before winter conditions prevent access. "The harsh Afghan winter is critical for families," said Mutinta Chimuka, Afghanistan's Deputy Country Director for WFP. "This UK support is crucial for helping vulnerable families

through the most challenging season." In 2023, WFP reached over 18 million people in Afghanistan, largely due to substantial donations. The UK is one of WFP's top five donors in Afghanistan, contributing £183.7 million (\$209 million) in the past two years.

Trade through Herat-Khaf railway will start in next two weeks

KABUL (Ariana News): Local officials in Herat province have announced that exports and imports through the newly-built Herat-Khaf railway con-

necting Afghanistan with Iran will begin in the next two weeks. Mohammad Nasim Mohammadi, provincial railway director in Herat,

said at a press conference that the transfer of commercial goods from Rozanak station on the Herat-Khaf railway line will begin in the next

two weeks, according to a statement released by Afghanistan Railway Authority on Tuesday. He added that in the next solar year, around 500,000 tons of commercial goods will be transported between Iran and Afghanistan along this railway line. According to Mohammadi, traders can export or import their goods from Afghanistan to Iran's Chabahar and Abbas ports and the Turkish border at a reduced tax. In addition, in the coming spring, a passenger service between Iran and Afghanistan will also start. Already, an Iranian company has said it will transport 100,000 tons of commercial goods and 100,000 passengers along this line in the first year.



Tajikistan sees no drop in drug smuggling from Afghanistan

KABUL (Ariana News): Tajikistan's Presidential Drug Control Agency (DCA) says it has not registered any decline in the volume of drug trafficking from neighboring Afghanistan. Referring to a recent UN Office on Drugs and Crime report, which stated opium cultivation and production had dropped by 95%, a DCA official Mukbilsho Muyassar told the press that opioids are still flowing into Tajikistan. "According to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, opium poppy cultivation and opium production in Afghanistan has decreased by 95%, yet opioids, such as heroin and opium, as

well as Afghan-made methamphetamine, are still flowing into Tajikistan, with the reason behind this being that Afghan drug manufacturers generate greater profits from methamphetamine production," he said. Russia's TASS news agency reported that according to recent reports by the DCA, clandestine synthetic drug labs have started to emerge in Afghanistan to produce these drugs, which are then smuggled into Tajikistan and later transported to other countries. The DCA stated that more than 2.5 tons of illicit substances were seized from circulation in regions

of Tajikistan bordering on Afghanistan in 2023, accounting for over half of all drugs seized in the Central Asian country last year. Muyassar also said Tajikistan has received no information on any counter-narcotics efforts being implemented by Afghan authorities. Last December, Atageldi Yazlyyev, director of the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Center for Combating Illicit Trafficking of Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and their Precursors (CARICC), also said that despite analysts' estimates of poppy cultivation in Afghanistan

plummeting, the center's statistics indicated an increase in opium trafficking. He attributed this to the need to dispose of reserves from previous years' harvests. The Islamic Emirate has not yet responded to this claim by Tajikistan, but it has repeatedly stated that it has taken serious steps to stop the cultivation and production of narcotics. In April 2022, the Islamic Emirate banned the cultivation of poppy across the country, promising to prosecute violators under Sharia law. A ban was also imposed on "the use, transportation, trade, export and import of all types of narcotic drugs."



396 fake social media accounts created in name of 21 key figures

KABUL (Pajhwok): Many fake social media pages have been created in names of key figures and politicians in the previous and current government, sowing hate, hostilities, prejudice and differences in the nation. Pajhwok Afghan News has found pages in the name of a number of former and current government officials and politicians on Facebook and X pages with pictures. There are some other pages in the names of these people, but they are not included in this report because there are many people which same names and the pages without photographs may belong to other people. Pajhwok identified original Facebook and X accounts of the individuals, either confirmed by reliable sources or marked with green verification marks by Facebook and X handles. The list features at the top individuals with most fake pages in their name and at the bottom those with least fake Facebook accounts. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani About 25 fake Facebook and 38 X pages have been created in the name of former president Mohammad Ashraf Ghani. Ghani's verified Facebook account : http://tinyurl.com/admx4n9a Ghani's verified X (formerly known as Twitter) account : http://tinyurl.com/3fvj8kw8 Hamid Karzai The most (35) FB pages

and six X handles have been created in the name of former president Hamid Karzai. Karzai's confirmed FB page : http://tinyurl.com/478m5apj Karzai's confirmed X account : http://tinyurl.com/ms98dsx4 Atta Mohammad Noor About 34 FB and six X pages have been created in the name of Atta Mohammad Noor, leader of Jamiat-i-Islami Afghanistan. Noor's verified X page: http://tinyurl.com/3ush26h4 Pajhwok could not find a verified FB page of Noor. There was a verified FB page in the name of Noor before (https://bit.ly/31iscU2) but this account does not exist any longer. Amrullah Saleh About 26 FB and seven X accounts exist in the name of former vice-president Amrullah Saleh. Saleh's verified FB account: Saleh's X account, which has 1.1 million followers and most of the media quoted its posts, has no mark of verification. Gulbaddin Hekmatyar About 24 FB and two X pages exist in the name of Hezb-i-Islami Afghanistan leader Gulbaddin Hekmatyar. A source in HIA told Pajhwok that Hekmatyar had only one FB page in his name, and the rest of social media pages created in his name are fake. Confirmed by this source, Hekmatyar's X page: http://tinyurl.com/5xznkwtv

Abdul Rashid Dostum Nineteen FB and five X accounts have been created in the name of Jumbish Milli leader Abdul Rashid Dostum. Dostum's FB account with verified mark: http://tinyurl.com/3c9juec2 Ehsanullah, spokesman for the ex-VP, told Pajhwok Dostum had no social media account and all the pages in his name, including the verified one, are forged. Anas Haqqani About 18 X account have been created in the name of the high-ranking official of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA), Hafiz Anas Haqqani. Mufti Abdul Matin Qane, spokesman for the Ministry of Interior, said Haqqani had only one X page and the rest are phony. Mohammad Yaqoob Mujahid About eight FB and 12 X pages exist in the name of the acting defence minister, Maulvi Mohammad Yaqoob Mujahid. Enayatullah Khwarzami, spokesman for MoD, says the acting minister did not have any social media account. Zabiullah Mujahid Three FB and 13 X accounts are available in the name of chief spokesman of IEA Zabiullah Mujahid. Mujahid says he has only one X account and no FB page. Muahid's X handle: http://tinyurl.com/3jph74sa Mohammad Mohaqiq About 12 FB and four X accounts exist in the name of

Mohammad Mohaqiq, leader of the Wahdat-i-Islami People party. Mohaqiq's verified FB page : http://tinyurl.com/2mcn5bp9 His verified X account: http://tinyurl.com/2zrfjc3k Dr Abdullah Abdullah About 15 FB accounts are available in the name of former chairman of High Council for National Reconciliation Dr Abdullah Abdullah. Pajhwok found no fake X handle in his name. Abdullah's FB account with verified mark: http://tinyurl.com/3bbpzd8c Abdullah's X handle with verified mark: http://tinyurl.com/39b9jbnn Mullah Mohammad Hassan Akhund About 12 FB pages and three X accounts have been created in the name of the Prime Minister Mullah Mohammad Hassan Akhund. Pajhwok tried to obtain information in this regard from government spokesmen but failed. However, the Ministry of Information and Culture earlier said Mullah Hassan Akhund had no social media account. Abdul Rab Rasoul Sayyaf. Thirteen FB and one X pages have been created in the name of Dawat-i-Islami chief Abdul Rab Rasoul Sayyaf. Sayyaf's verified X: http://tinyurl.com/pcwaywuv He has no verified FB page but there is an account that mostly publishes H a d i t h s : http://tinyurl.com/49ct4kwh

KP cabinet meeting takes number of decision of urgent nature

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Caretaker Cabinet of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa met here Tuesday under the chairmanship Chief Minister Syed Arshad Hussain Shah took a number of decisions pertaining to the issues of day-to-day affairs of the Province and of urgent nature. The meeting was actively participated by the cabinet members, the Chief Secretary and administrative secretaries of the Province.

The cabinet approve the hiring of transactional Advisor / Legal Consultant for negotiations of agreements regarding private public partnerships with different entities and in this regard authorized the office of Advocate General of the Province. It approved exemption from section 22-A of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Procurement Regulatory Authority Act 2012 enabling the Provincial Culture and Tourism Department to out-source the PTDC properties under Public Private Partnership mode.

As a result of 18th Constitutional Amendment in 2010 Federal Ministry of Tourism having been devolved to the provinces, 19 different properties of PTDC were handed over to the Tourism Department of the Province. The outsourcing of these properties to local and international investors will be made under the guidance of Special Investment Facilitation Council.

The Cabinet approved a sum of Rs.10 million as grant-in-aid for provision of Safe dignified living conditions in education to the orphans of Muskan Institute Swat against the demand of Rs.34 million by its management. It is worth mentioning that on the directives of Chief Secretary, the Additional Secretary Social Welfare Department had visited the said Institute and had pointed out that the Organization was facing financial

crises due to inflation, particularly food related items and had proposed the one-time grant-in-aid.

The non-profit organization has been established in 1968 and has catered for the welfare and education needs of over 1300 orphan girls. The Cabinet approved a sum of Rs.10 million as grant-in-aid for provision of annual suspense fund and grant-in-aid for Umeed Special Education School Peshawar. Since 2015-16 the Provincial Government has been providing grant-in-aid to the Institute which included Rs.5 million each during the years 2015-16 and 2016-17, Rs.10 million each in 2017-18, 2019-20, and 2020-21, Rs.12 million in 2021-22 and Rs.5 million during 2022-23.

The Cabinet approved Mrs. Durreh Shahwar and Imran Takkar as members of the Provincial Parole Committee as per Rule-11(2) of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Probation and Parole Rules 2023 read with Section-14(1) of the Probation and Parole Act, 2021. It provided for appointment of two members from the civil society as members of the said Committee for three years. While Additional Secretary Home and Tribal Affairs is ex-officio the chairman of the said Committee, Inspector General of Prisons is its member and Director of Reclamation and Probation its member-cum-Secretary. The caretaker Government of the Province had on June 8, 2023 approved the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Probation and Parole Rules 2022, Rule-11 of which calls for constitution of the Provincial Parole Committee.

The cabinet enhanced the honorarium for muavineen-e-qazi in Malakand from Rs.1200/- per working day to Rs.2,000. It is worth mentioning that under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nizam-e-Adle Regulation 2009, as many as 104

muavineen-e-qazi were appointed for a period of 3 years in May 2019. After completion of their tenures, the terms of 74 of them was extended for another period of 3 years.

The cabinet approved the remuneration of Rs.600 per day for the body search duty in tests/examinations of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Service Commission. While conducting different types of tests and examinations for appointments to various posts in the Province, the Commission has been paying different types of remunerations for various types of duties in these tests and examinations. However, no remuneration was fixed for the body search. The Commission had observed that in the absence and non availability of body search in MCQs based tests of the Commission candidates have tried using various types of electronic gadgets including mobile phones for cheating purposes.

The cabinet approved amendment to Rule 23 of Tehsil Fiscal Transfer Rules 2023, strengthening the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Fiscal Transfer Rules 2023 and providing legal cover to its budget and audit. The cabinet approved Syed Muhammad Javed, M/S Dilawar Farhan Shams, Zahir Shah and Engr. Qaiser Zaman as independent directors to the Board of Directors of Water and Sanitation Services Company (WSSC) Mardan in line with Section 165 of the Companies Act and in pursuance of Section 35 of the Articles of Association of WSSC Mardan.

The Cabinet Directed the Board of Directors of KPOGCL to re-initiate the process of appointment of Chief Executive Officer afresh strictly in accordance with the provisions contained in Companies Act 2017 read with Rule 5(2) of Public Sector Companies Corporate Governance Rules 2013, Policy Framework of Provincial Government vis-a-vis matters related to CEO and the SECP



guidelines for appointment of CEO 2015.

The Board was also directed to complete the verification of experience of candidates and other related matters prior to submission of case to the Provincial Government. The Energy and Power Department was also allowed to take up a case with the Election Commission of Pakistan to grant NOC for initiating the process of the appointment of CEO of KP OGCL. It is worth mentioning that in August 2021 on the demise of late CEO of KPOGCL Osman Ghani Khattak, the BOD KPOGCL had initiated the process of hiring of new CEO and had recommended a panel of three candidates to the Government of whom the cabinet had on 25-10-2022 approved the appointment of Dr Amir khan Jadoon but during verification it was found that he had not provided the correct information regarding his experience in British Petroleum.

Consequently, the BOD had decided to withdraw and revoke the offer letter. However the said Dr.Amir khan Jadoon had filed writ petition in the Peshawar High Court against the revocation of his offer letter by the BOD KPOGCL obtaining a stay order. The High Court had on September 13, 2023 dismissed the said writ petition. The cabinet approved the appointment of

Muhammad Ayub as Chief Executive Officer of Transmission and Grid System Company (KPT&GSE).

The position had been advertised in September 2022 in response to which eight applications were received and after scrutiny four candidates were shortlisted. The concern Committee had analyzed all the shortlisted candidates for the post, on the basis of qualification, experience in the relevant field and proper criteria of experience etc. The Caretaker Cabinet granted additional charge of the post of Chief Executive Pakhtunkhwa Energy Development Organization (PEDO) to Commissioner Peshawar Zubair Khan and also directed the concerned authorities to expedite the process of appointing permean CEO of the said Organization.

The cabinet appreciate the performance of secretary agriculture for efficiently perusing the case of payment of enhanced compensation of land acquired by Agriculture University for Ameer Muhammad Khan Campus Mardan amounting to Rs.7.87 billion (upto July 20, 2022). The 2000 kanal land had been acquired at the rate of Rs.2800 per marla in the year 2010. Aggrieved over the price, the land owners have filed appeals in the courts where the said compensation has been increased with interest till final payment. The

Court had recently frozen the bank accounts of the University and also issued non-bailable warrant of arrest against the Secretary Agriculture Department for failing to make the enhanced payment to the land owners.

The Government and the University had lost all appeals and revisions up to the Supreme Court of Pakistan. However, on the request of the Secretary Agriculture the court has recently adjourned sine die the proceeding till the till the taking over by the elected Government. The Cabinet approved the shifting of Solicitor Office along with staff from the Directorate General Law and Human Rights to Law Parliamentary Affairs and Human Rights Affairs.

The shifting will ensure timely disposal of court matters and litigation. The Solicitor wing used to be housed in the Law Department as a separate wing but it was shifted to the Directorate General Law and Human Rights in 2019 which caused administrative inconvenience and complications in litigation management because the wing was administratively attached to the Directorate General Law and Human Rights located in Hayatabad while the Scrutiny Committee for declaring the case fit or otherwise for filing of CPLA in Supreme Court was a housed in the Law Department.

Alvi directs payment to heirs of insurance policyholder

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has directed Postal Life Insurance to pay the death insurance claim of Rs 5 million to the legal heirs of the deceased policyholder within 30 days.

He gave these directions while deciding upon a representation filed by the Postal Life Insurance (PLI) against the decision of Wafaqi Mohtasib directing it to pay the death insurance claim, a President Secretariat press release said on Tuesday. As per details, complainant Abdul Aziz's deceased father had obtained an insurance policy from PLI for the sum assured of Rs 5 million against an annual premium of Rs 448,600 in 2010.

After his father died in 2015, PLI refused to pay the death insurance claim on the pretext that the deceased had concealed

material facts about his date of birth and the pre-insurance ailment of diabetes at the time of obtaining the insurance policy. Feeling aggrieved, the son (complainant) filed a complaint with the Wafaqi Mohtasib to seek relief. Wafaqi Mohtasib held that the deceased had purchased the insurance policy as per his date of birth mentioned on CNIC and that PLI had issued the insurance policy after accepting the requisite information.

The Mohtasib held that the denial by the insurance agency to honour the claim of the complainant amounted to maladministration. Afterward, PLI filed a representation against this decision with the president.

President Dr Arif Alvi, in his decision, observed that as per Section 80 of the Insurance Ordinance, 2000 no policy of life insurance effected after the com-

mencement date shall, after the expiry of two years from the date on which it was affected, be called in question by an insurer on the ground that a statement made in the proposal for insurance or in any report of a medical officer was inaccurate or false. He also referred to Lahore High Court's decision wherein it had been held that concealment of ailments, such as diabetes and hypertension, could not be termed as done fraudulently as most people having such ailments, by remaining more careful in their lifetime, lived either for decades or longer than people not having such diseases.

Keeping in view the facts, the President directed Postal Life Insurance to pay the death insurance to the heirs of the deceased within 30 days in compliance with the earlier decision of the Wafaqi Mohtasib.

ATC indicts Dr Yasmin, others in May 9 case

F.P. Report

LAHORE: An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Tuesday indicted Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders, Dr Yasmin Rashid, Mian Mehmoood Rasheed and Ijaz Chaudhry, in a case of torching Shadman Police Station.

The court also ordered a jail trial of the accused, besides summoning witnesses for recording their statements on the next date of hearing. ATC Judge Muhammad Naveed Iqbal conducted the trial proceedings wherein the PTI leaders were produced after bringing them from jail. The accused, who had obtained bail, also appeared before the court.

The court indicted all the accused during the trial proceedings, observing that the copies of challan had already been distributed. However, the accused pleaded not guilty and expressed their intent to contest the charges.

At this, the court adjourned proceedings and summoned prosecution witnesses to record their statements, on the next date of hearing. The court also ordered a jail trial of the accused. The prosecution had filed a challan against the accused on charges of torching Shadman Police Station during May-9 riots.

Meanwhile, ATC Judge Muhammad Naveed Iqbal also indicted the PTI leaders in another case of torching police vehicles in the cantonment area at Rahat Bakery Chowk.

Bushra Bibi knocks IHC door

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Bushra Bibi, convicted in the Toshka Khana case, on Tuesday filed a petition with the Islamabad High Court seeking transfer from Bani Gala to Adiala Jail.

According to media reports, in her petition, the wife of former Prime Minister Imran Khan contests the administration's decision, dated January 31, to designate Bani Gala as a sub-jail. Bushra Bibi insists on serving her sentence in Adiala Jail. Stating the principle of equality before the law, Bushra Bibi argues that other political detainees are housed alongside ordinary prisoners, and her transfer to Bani Gala Sub-Jail is a violation of her rights. She highlights the ordeal of being transferred from Adiala Jail to the sub-jail in Bani Gala on January 31, from 10 am to 9 pm.

The plea submitted to the High Court seeks the annulment of the notification issued by the Chief Commissioner's Office in Islamabad on January 31, challenging the legality of her confinement in Bani Gala.

Israel presses onslaught in Gaza's Khan Younis

GAZA: Israeli forces killed at least 14 Palestinians in airstrikes as they pressed their onslaught in Gaza's main southern city Khan Younis on Tuesday, while the top US diplomat pursued a quest to broker a ceasefire in the four-month-old war.

Israel said its forces had killed dozens of Palestinian gunmen throughout Gaza in the past 24 hours with fighting focused on Khan Younis in the south and a threatened assault looming on a nearby border town teeming with displaced people. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived in Egypt for talks after a stop in Saudi Arabia during his latest trouble-shooting Middle East swing that Palestinians hope will nail down a ceasefire before Israeli forces storm Gaza's southern fringes where over a million of Gaza's people are sheltering.

It was Blinken's fifth trip to the region since Hamas militants' lightning attack on Israel from Gaza on Oct. 7 triggered the war, and his first visit since Washington brokered an offer, with Israeli input, for the first extended ceasefire of the conflict. Hamas says it is still weighing the proposal. Blinken departed Riyadh just after sunrise and arrived in Cairo where he began talks with President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi. He is then due to fly on to Qatar and Israel.

Washington has for weeks sought an elusive deal to secure the release of remaining hostages among those Hamas kidnapped in its Oct. 7 assault, as key to making headway on broader challenges such as the governance of post-war Gaza. The ceasefire offer, delivered to Hamas last week by Qatari and Egyptian mediators, awaits a reply from militants who say they want more guarantees it will stop Israel's blitz on Gaza, against Israeli vows to keep fighting

until Hamas is wiped out.

Washington also aims to prevent further escalation elsewhere in the Middle East, after days of US airstrikes on armed proxies of Iran, a major backer of Hamas, and further attacks on Red Sea shipping by Yemen's Tehran-aligned Houthi militia. In an update on Tuesday, Gaza's Health Ministry said at least 27,585 Palestinians had been confirmed killed in Israel's military campaign, with thousands more feared buried under vast tracts of rubble across the densely populated enclave. Some 107 had been killed in the past 24 hours, the ministry said.

Israel says 226 of its soldiers have been killed in its offensive, launched after militants from Hamas-ruled Gaza burst through the border fence and killed 1,200 people and took 253 hostages in a rampage through nearby Israeli communities. Israeli forces on Tuesday kept up the pressure on Khan Younis, the focus of their offensive for weeks. Aerial and tank bombardment thundered through the shattered city overnight, with at least 14 people killed by air strikes since the pre-dawn hours, Palestinian residents and medics told Reuters.

They said Israeli tanks and aircraft continued to pound and besiege areas around Khan Younis's two main hospitals — Nasser and Al-Amal. Israel's military says Hamas militants use hospital premises for cover, which Gaza's ruling Islamists deny. Rafah, Palestinians' last southern refuge from Israeli advances toward the border with Egypt, was battered by several Israeli air strikes and tank shelling overnight with medics reporting at least several wounded among the many displaced.

At makeshift tent camps in Rafah, untreated sewage flooded toward a

shelter for the displaced, the latest sign of Gaza's sanitation system collapsing, raising the spectre of disease. Clothes flapped outside tents made from sheets of thin plastic. Hanan Abu Gabal cooked for her family in a pot over a small fire in the sand.

"We fled for our lives right in the middle of the battle. A rocket was thrown in the school and we barely made it out alive," she said. "We were forcefully displaced from Khan Younis; they followed us. And now we've been forcefully displaced to Rafah, but where else are we meant to go?" In Gaza City in the north of the narrow coastal enclave, residents reported further Israeli air strikes and tank shelling. Fighting has resumed in Gaza City two months after Israel said it had subdued the area.

In parts of urban north Gaza, displaced people venturing back to check the fate of their homes after some Israeli tanks pulled back told Reuters they were shocked to find few buildings still standing, with rows of multi-floor apartment blocks razed and roads flipped upside down by Israeli bulldozers and bombs. During his Middle East swing, Blinken aims to win backing for US plans for what would follow a Gaza truce: rebuilding and running the tiny territory, and ultimately for a Palestinian state — which Israel now rules out — and for Arab countries to normalize relations with Israel. The ceasefire proposal, as described by sources close to the talks, envisages a truce of at least 40 days when militants would free civilians among remaining hostages they are holding, followed by later phases to hand over soldiers and bodies, in exchange for releases of Palestinians imprisoned in Israel. The only truce so far lasted just a week in November. — Arab News

PHC orders Haripur DC to appear before court today

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice Shakeel Ahmad and Justice Kamran Hayat Miankhel ordered Deputy Commissioner (DC) Haripur for appearance before court today (on Wednesday) in arrest of former provincial minister Yousaf Ayub under Section 3 of Maintenance of Public Order (MPO), on Tuesday.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Yousaf Ayub was arrested on 2nd February 2023 under 3MPO on District Police Officer (DPO) Haripur recommendation, the counsel argued. The lawyers added that Yousaf Ayub is law abiding citizen and busy in election campaign as his two brothers are contesting general elections scheduled on 8th February.

The court had already stopped law enforcement agencies from harassment of petitioner's two brothers but Yousaf Ayub was detained on DC orders under 3MPO which is against the constitution of Pakistan, the lawyers added.

The counsel argued for declaration of 4MPO is illegal and unconstitutional as

well as release of Yousaf Ayub because the petitioner's family is continuously under harassment and pressure to stop them from election campaign which is clear cut violation of fundamental rights.

In the meantime, Justice Shakeel Ahmad observed that why no this plea should be transfer to PHC Abbottabad bench as well as suspend MPO orders against petitioner. Additional Attorney General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Danyal Asad Chamkani argued that Yousaf Ayub was arrested under 3MPO after DPO directions because he is threat to law and order situation during election.

Justice Kamran Hayat Miankhel remarked that the plea deals with one's freedom. However, Additional Advocate General Danyal Asad argued that DC may issue MPO orders for maintenance of law and order situation. PHC's divisional bench comprising of Justice Shakeel Ahmad and Justice Kamran Hayat Miankhel ordered DC Haripur to appear today.

Meanwhile, Chief Justice PHC Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan adjourned hearing on writ plea against arrest of PTI

Local Government chairman Nabi Ullah from court's premises till 13th February.

The counsel Khurram Zeeshan and Shah Faisal advocates argued that Nabi Ullah was arrested from court's premises in Kohat on his return from Bail before Arrest plea by police along with other persons in civil dress. The lawyers claimed that two eye-witnesses of the arrest had recorded their statements before Additional Registrar while PHC Chief Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan adjourned further hearing till 13th February.

AD&SJ grants bail before arrest: Additional District and Session Judge (AD&SJ) Shaukat Ali granted Bail before Arrest of alleged culprit involved in drug smuggling, on Tuesday.

According to prosecution, on 31st December 2023 arrested a smuggler along with two kilograms Ice-drug and disclosed name of Raza Shah as owner of the contrabands.

The counsel Shehryar Khilji advocate argued that neither drugs are recovered from possession of Raza Shah nor having any relation with the arrested accused.

Aleema challenges FIA notices

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Aleema Khan on Tuesday challenged the notices issued by the FIA in the Islamabad High Court (IHC). Aleema Khan, the sister of PTI founder, through Advocate Shiraz Ranjha, filed two petitions and requested the IHC to fix them for hearing today. She requested the court to suspend the FIA cybercrime circle's Feb 2 notice and order it to provide evidence and records against her.

It may be recalled that the counter-terrorism wing of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) summoned her to its headquarters on Tuesday (today) to question her for allegedly spreading hatred against the state and "creating a divide" between the people and the armed forces. Assistant Director (Investigation)

Ejaz Ahmed Sheikh sent her a notice stating that inquiry No 4/24 had been initiated by an FIA sector officer on the request of the Ministry of Interior. The inquiry has been moved on charges of spreading hateful material through a speech and committing anti-state activities and criminal conspiracy to create division between the public and the army.