



Bilawal vows to abolish 17 federal ministries if PPP voted into power

PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Monday vowed to abolish 17 federal ministries if his party elected into power following general elections to save taxpayers' "Rs300 billion". Bilawal said the 17 federal ministries should have been devolved to provinces after the 18th Constitutional Amendment, Geo News reported.



Israeli airstrikes kill 100 in one of war's deadliest nights, Gaza officials say

At a funeral in Gaza on Monday a line of Palestinians touched white shrouds containing the bodies of at least 70 people who Palestinian health officials said were killed by an Israeli airstrike targeting Maghazi in the centre of the besieged strip. It came after one of the enclave's deadliest nights in the 11-week-old battle between Israel and Hamas. One man hugged a dead child and others were hysterical. (Details on Page 8)

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

Cutting The Cake

Army Chief General Asim Munir takes part in cake-cutting ceremony at a church in Rawalpindi.



Photo: ISPR

Interfaith harmony need of hour, says COAS Munir

City Desk

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff Gen Asim Munir joined the Christian community at Christ Church, Rawalpindi in Christmas celebrations on Monday, said ISPR.

According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the army chief, speaking on the occasion, said, "Islam teaches us the lesson of peace, friendship and encourages interfaith harmony which is the need of the hour".

The congregation welcomed COAS and thanked him for sharing the festivity. COAS wished Merry Christmas to the entire Christian community in Pakistan.

The army chief expressed reverence for religious community and stressed upon the need for promoting greater interfaith harmony in society in order to follow Quaid's true vision of a united and progressive Pakistan.

"COAS stressed upon the importance of having correct perspective, truth and knowl-

edge based opinions about national issues rather than following rhetoric and propaganda, to address complex challenges and issues," said ISPR.

"Enemies of Pakistan are hell-bent towards creating fissures using religious, ethnic and political vulnerabilities. We have to stand together & united to rise as a resolute and strong nation," COAS remarked.

The army chief while paying glowing tribute to Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's great vision and leadership on his 147th birth anniversary, quoted Quaid's historical remarks made in his speech on 11 August 1947 while addressing the Constituent Assembly, "You are free. You are free to go to your temples. You are free to go to your mosques or to any other places of worship in this State of Pakistan."

At the end, COAS befittingly acknowledged the contributions and sacrifices made by the entire Christian community of Pakistan in all the fields.

Caretaker PM stresses upon forging of unity under Quaid's guiding principles

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar has stressed upon the need of forging of unity for the continuity of democracy, peaceful coexistence and rule of law and for the elimination of extremist forces. In a message on the occasion of 147th birthday of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of the nation, on Monday, the prime minister said that on this day, they should reaffirm their commitment to the national unity and prosperous and progressive Pakistan.

Quaid's principles of 'unity, faith and discipline' should be the guiding principles for all as a nation to realize the democratic state as conceived by their founder," he emphasized. Extending facilitation to the nation on Quaid's birthday, the caretaker prime minister said that the entire nation was celebrating the occasion with zeal, fervor and reverence. He said that they were blessed with a great leader that had led the Muslims of the sub-continent and at last achieved a separate homeland. Quaid-e-Azam had gathered the Muslims under one banner for waging a struggle for the realization of a separate new Muslim



state on the global map. Prime Minister Kakar said that the personality of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah was still a beacon of guidance owing to his unmatched character and

extraordinary leading qualities. His resolve and undeterred will had infused the Muslims with firm determination and courage to face all the ordeals in the continuation of their struggle and in way of achievement of their great goal, Prime Minister Office Media Wing, in a press release, quoted the prime minister as saying. The prime minister further observed that by following the message of unity, faith and discipline, and by rendering huge sacrifices, the Muslims of sub-continent achieved the collective objective. Quaid's quality of impeccable character led the Muslims to their destination.

Due to his adherence to principles, integrity and strong faith, even his foes also respected him, the prime minister opined. He said Quaid's life was a reflection of constitutional struggle and political acumen. The caretaker prime minister said that being a nation, it was apt to act upon the principles of Quaid which would be the best way to pay him tribute. On August 11, 1947, in his speech, Quaid had made it clear that every individual would have the complete freedom of practicing faith and religion in Pakistan, he said and underlined the need to reiterate Quaid's message of interfaith harmony.

Bilawal calls for end to politics of hatred

Bureau Report

NAWABSHAH: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addressed challenges and solutions the country faces, highlighting the need to confront historical issues such as inflation, poverty, and unemployment.

Speaking at a Cadet College ceremony, he highlighted the college's role in fulfilling the dream of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto for women. He said the new generation is the future of the country.

Bilawal discussed key problems, including the economic crisis and climate change, asserting that addressing these challenges requires a shift in the development map and the use of modern technology.

Solangi stresses on democratic means, adherence to rule of law to tackle issues

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information & Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi Monday stressed on addressing the challenges being faced by the country through democratic means, negotiations, and adherence to the rule of law, as extra-constitutional measures could only lead to destruction. Speaking at a speech competition organized by the Directorate of Electronic Media and Production (DEMP) among the students of model schools and colleges affiliated with the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) to pay tribute to Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah on his birth anniversary, he underscored that the pivotal solu-



tion to the country's urgent challenges laid in upholding democratic traditions. "Respecting the Constitution is crucial as progress rests in following the law. Deviating from this may lead to chaos and a breach of constitutional principles," the minister said. Solangi asserted that the country could overcome its prevailing challenges by wholeheartedly embracing the principles advocated by Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

Secretary Information & Broadcasting Ms Shahera Shahid, in her vote of thanks speech, commended the students for their insightful vision which they expressed through speeches. The 10 students, who delivered speeches today, were the winners of the competition among the students of ICT model schools and colleges under the FDE. Aimen Farhan was stood first while Sundas Farooq and Feroza Bibi claimed second and third positions among the 10 students, and received cash prizes of Rs 20,000, Rs 15,000, and Rs 10,000 respectively, along with published books from DEMP. The remaining seven students, including Feroza Bibi, Zain Ali, Farqunallah, Ayesha Hammad, Mahnoor Baloch, Fabiha Shahzadi and Saleh Tariq were awarded DEMP's published books and participation certificates. Mr. Arshad Munir Executive DG, DEMP also present on the occasion.

Chahat Fateh Ali Khan enters political arena

Spokesman Report



ISLAMABAD: In a surprising turn of events, social media sensation and well-known artist Chahat Fateh Ali Khan has stepped into the political ring.

In a viral video on social media, the famous musician disclosed that he has reportedly filed his candidature papers for the forthcoming National Assembly elections from NA-128, Lahore.

Islamabad IG, DC removed on ECP orders

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Following the orders of Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), Islamabad IGP Akbar Nasir Khan and Islamabad Deputy Commissioner Irfan Nawaz Memon were removed from their



respective posts with immediate effect.

CM removes CIA DIG Liaquat for torturing doctors, journalists

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Taking notice of alleged police highhandedness, Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi removed CIA DIG Malik Liaquat from his post and ordered registration of a case against those involved in vandalising in Doctors' Hospital and torturing journalists. The S&GAD on Monday issued a notification of Malik Liaquat's removal. He has been made OSD.

President approves Ahad Cheema's removal as adviser to PM

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi approved the removal of Ahad Khan Cheema from his post of Adviser to Prime Minister for Establishment.

On the instruction of the Election Commission of Pakistan, the caretaker prime minister sent the summary to the President for the removal of Ahad Cheema from his post. The president approved the removal of Ahad Cheema on the advice of the prime minister under Article 48 of the constitution.

PTI to move PHC against ECP verdict on electoral symbol

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Monday announced its plan to contest the Election Commission of Pakistan's decision invalidating its internal elections and revoking the symbolic 'bat' emblem in the Peshawar High Court on Tuesday.



This action follows the electoral body's recent nullification—marking the second

time in under a month—of PTI's internal polls where Barrister Gohar Ali Khan

secured the position of party chairman easily. The commission's ruling, reached through an unprecedented scrutiny of a political party's internal workings, deemed PTI ineligible for an election symbol in the forthcoming general elections.

Citing non-compliance with their directives and failure to conduct intra-party elections in accordance with PTI's prevail-

ing Constitution of 2019, the Election Act of 2017, and Election Rules of 2017, the ECP outlined its decision in an 11-page order issued on November 23, 2023.

The PTI denounced the decision as part of a purported "famous London Plan" and an endeavor to obstruct their electoral participation. They vowed to challenge the verdict at all possible platforms and affirmed their candidates' intent to contest the elections using the 'bat' symbol.

16th death anniversary Shaheed held at Garhi Khuda Bakhsh: Makhdoom Ahmed

Asim Tanveer

President of Pakistan People's Party South Punjab and former Governor of Punjab Makhdoom Syed Ahmed Mehmood, Senior Vice President Pakistan People's Party South Punjab Khawaja Rizwan Alam, Chief Coordinator Pakistan People's Party South Punjab Abdul Qadir Shaheen to all organizations and allied wings of South Punjab on 27 December 2023. Martyred Democracy Instructions for attending and arriving at Benazir Bhutto's 16th Anniversary Larkana Central Ceremony issued.

Provincial President of People's Party South Punjab Makhdoom Syed Ahmed Mehmood in connection with the 16th anniversary of the martyred democracy Ms. Benazir Bhutto in the main event organized on December 27 at Garhi Khuda Bakhsh Larkana, officials of all the divisional district and city organizations of the party along with ticket holders. Have issued instructions to Make sure you attend to pay homage to your martyred leader

On December 27, the party chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, former president Asif Ali Zardari, the party presidents of the four provinces, and

the central officials of the party, including the great achievements of the martyred Ms. Benazir Bhutto, from the meeting of Ms. Benazir Bhutto held in Larkana Garhi Khuda Bakhsh. To pay homage to him for his services. At the same time, he will issue a special address and party instructions for the general elections to be held across the country on February 8.

He has emphasized on all the party organizations of South Punjab and said that the election schedule has arrived, all the divisional district city and tehsil organizations and allied wings should take the electoral front along with their colleagues, the officials of the PPP Lawyers Forum should guide the party ticketed candidates legally. Party officials and workers start the election campaign as an ambassador of Chairman PPP, Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's poverty is a war with unemployment and inflation, female officials and workers go door to door to inform women about the party manifesto, PSF officials and workers convey the message of Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari to the students, People's Officials and activists of the youth should inform the youth about the statement of Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari,

and similarly the officials and activists of the People's Labor Bureau should inform the party program.

* President of Pakistan People's Party South Punjab and former governor of Punjab Makhdoom Syed Ahmed Mehmood, Senior Vice President Pakistan People's Party South Punjab Khawaja Rizwan Alam, Chief Coordinator Pakistan People's Party South Punjab Abdul Qadir Shaheen said that Pakistan People's Party is a democratic political party. Who believes in democratic politics. Our politics is not about coercion and bullying threats, today the environment of Punjab has changed, people have rejected those who commit political revenge terrorism on the basis of political differences, today the parties criticizing the People's Party of this province of Punjab. Nothing was ever done for the people of backward rural areas. Inshallah, the people of South and Central Punjab will make Chairman Pakistan People's Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari the Prime Minister with the power of their conscience and valuable votes in the February 8 elections.

It was further said that today two parties are in our competition, one wants to come out of jail and one



wants to escape from jail, we have no such concern, we are neither afraid of NAB nor jails, our workers know that

politics. How it is done and how political campaigns are run, it's time we do it. Start your election campaign with a

new energy and full of energy. Inshallah, the arrow sign will be victorious on February 8.

Christmas Celebration

JARANWALA: Regional Police Officer Faisalabad Muhammad Abid, SSP Investigation Rizwan Ahmed Khan and Father Khalid Mukhtar cutting the Christmas cake and offering the prayer.



Spokesman Photo by Abdul Majid

PPP has taken revolutionary measures to stabilize the country's economy: Gillani



Kiran Asim

MULTAN: Former Prime Minister and Senator Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani has said that the People's Party has taken revolutionary measures to stabilize the country's economy, unemployment and inflation, and end terrorism, but even if the people gave a heavy mandate, they could not fulfill their trust. Bani Pakistan Quaid will ensure steps in real sense. By following the thoughts of Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, we have to move forward to take our beloved Pakistan on the path of development and prosperity. Congratulations to the Christian brothers on the occasion of the establishment of the Christian brothers. Sacrifices for Pakistan are not hidden from anyone. Those who join the People's Party are welcome. They will be given a rightful place in the party. He expressed these views along with Barrister Mudassar Hussain Shah and Malik Rizwan Hans in his constituency NA148 and PP214. Arrival at the residence of former compensation commissioner Nadir Farid Khan Babar in the meeting held on the occasion of Waleed Khan Babar Member Narcotics Control Punjab, Umar Farid Khan Babar Senior Vice President PTI Youth Wing South Punjab Imran Shah expressed confidence in the leadership of Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani along with his colleagues.

Allama Tahirul Hasan has submitted nomination papers from PP 118

Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: Talking to the media, Allama Tahir-ul-Hasan, Central Deputy General Secretary, Pakistan Ulema Council, said that for the development and prosperity of Pakistan and to improve the economic situation, and to end the Dera Shahi and feudal system, the people should use the power of their vote. We have to choose good representatives. We are participating in the election on the demand of the people. Our aim is to serve the people and we will work tirelessly to end poverty and unemployment. Pakistan is rich in resources but unfortunately it has been occupied by certain families for 75 years due to which the country is in debt and every Pakistani is worried about inflation with indebtedness. Get relief and rule of law. We have never disappointed our people before and in the future we will work together day and night to solve the problems of the people and make the constituency an ideal constituency. The people will play their important role in this election to end the politics of self-interested groups with the power of their vote and choose the right representatives for their rights. They are associated with the world of fools who talk against the institutions of Pakistan. The whole nation stands with its Pakistan Army and security institutions. Will keep.

ID blast in Sara Ghora area of Wana, son of late Malik Shireen martyred.

Adam Khan Wazir

WANA: Akbar Jan alias Barjak, son of late Malik Shireen Jan, was ID attacked in Sara Ghora area of Azam Warsak in Lower Waziristan district on Monday around evening, in which Akbar Jan was martyred. Akbar John was going to his house on a motorcycle.

According to officials, a bomb exploded near Sara Ghora in Azam Warsak area of South Waziristan Lower District. In which Akbar Jan alias Barjak Dari Khel Wazir son of late Malik Shireen Jan Dari Khel was martyred in a roadside bomb explosion.

Police officials confirmed the incident and said that the son of the late Malik Shireen Jan Dari Khel Wazir was going home on his motorcycle, that during which the planted bomb exploded with a loud explosion in which he was martyred on the spot. It should be remembered that after 9/11, this family has made many sacrifices in the war against terrorism.



Nomination Papers submit of 106 candidates for NA 42 & PK 110, PK 109 from SW Lower/Upper

Adam Khan Wazir

WANA: South Waziristan Lower and Upper National and Provincial Assemblies will be contested between a total of 106 candidates in the election to be held on February 8.

In this regard officials said, 38 candidates have submitted their nomination papers for NA 42 of South Waziristan.

While 38 candidates have submitted their nomination papers for constituency PK 110 of Lower South Waziristan and 30 candidates for constituency PK 109 of Upper South Waziristan.

In which two former members

of the National Assembly Maulana Jamal Uddin Mehsud and Ali Wazir are included.

While other candidates include Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam, Jamaat-e-Islami, Peoples Party, Pakistan Muslim League-N and PTI.

However, apart from this, most of the independent candidates have entered the field to contest the elections.

It should be noted that a tough contest is expected between the independent candidates, JUI and PTI for a National Assembly seat in South Lower and Upper.

Apart from this, the two provincial



constituencies PK 110 and PK 109 will also be contested between independ-

ent candidates, Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf.

It is to be remembered that earlier there were two seats of the National Assembly of South Waziristan, one was for Mehsud belt and one was for Wazir belt.

Now, after the merger of FATA in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Election Commission has reserved one seat.

In the last election, JUI's National Assembly candidate Maulana Jamal Uddin Mehsud won the seat from Mehsud constituency while Ali Wazir, the main leader of PTM, won the National Assembly seat from the Wazir belt.

Sports keeps the mind and body fit and healthy. Naseer Vohra

Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: On the occasion of Quaid-i-Azam Day organized by the District Sports Department at the People's Colony Pahariwali Ground, Chief Guest of the Sports Mela, Central President Cloth Board Etihad Group Pakistan Alhaj Naseer Yousuf Vohra was welcomed with flowers leaves, garlands and flower bouquets.

Done from The organizers of this sports fair were Ishtiaq Tarabi and Atif (Noomi Malik). MNA Umeed-



war Bilal Yousuf Shah, MS Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan Hospital Dr. Atta Monam, Chairman Faisalabad Divisional Wrestling Association Chaudhry Naseem Ahmed,

Babay Sports Haji Muhammad Rafi, Etimad Group Chairman Asim Khan, Divisional President of (APCA) Rana Abid Ali, and others also participated. In this sports fair, wrestling, karate as well as children's tableau were also presented.

It has been said in the address that the children showed their sports spirit in this sports fair with the hard work and made a place in the hearts of the fans with the tableau.

He has further said that the manner in which the organiz-

er has arranged the program in this event on the occasion of Quaid-e-Azam Day also deserves congratulations. Our leader Muhammad Ali Jinnah has always loved children. We should follow the footsteps of our leader and love our children and teach them to love Pakistan.

Naseer Yusuf Vohra distributed prizes and trophies among the successful children. Finally, prayers were also offered for the forces of Pakistan, the country of Pakistan and the children and all the people present there.

Islamabad
15° - 23° Clear

SERVICES
Namaz Timings
Fajr 5:41 am
Zohr 12:07 pm
Asr 3:27 pm
Maghrib 5:05 pm
Isha 6:34 pm

EMERGENCY
Rescue (Police) 15
Bomb Disposal 15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad 1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance 1122 & Rescue Services 4451122
Motorway Police 92766044
Motorway Police 9270601-20

Women Police Stations
Islamabad 9222596
Rawalpindi 9270601-20

ENQUIRY
Edhi Ambulance 115
PIA Flight Info 114
PIA Cargo 9280979
Railway Inquiry 117
Railway Exchange 9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi 5555489
CAA 9281092

HOSPITALS
CMH 561111
MH 561116
MH 561116
Cantt Hospital 9270907-11
DHQ 5556311-4
RGH 9290301-7
Holy Family 9290322-7
PIMS 9261170-79
Polyclinic 9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666

DEPARTMENTS
CDA 9221334-43
CDA 9208301-04
Met Office 9250360-6
RDA 5555864
TMA 5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3
Islamabad Metropolitan Corporation 9209224
Potohar Town 9209224
Rawal Town 5773343

COMPLAINTS
Water Tanker Service
E-7, F-10 & F-11 9204654
G-5, G-6, G-7, G-8 9203883
G-9, G-10, G-11, G-12, H-8 9266316
Wapda Islamabad 9217579-80
Sui Gas Complaint 119, 9272249
Wasa Water Tank Rawalpindi 0331-5022125

Message on the Quaid's day

Special Correspondent

MULTAN: Message from Chaudhry Zulfiqar Ali Anjam, the Chairman of the renowned industrial group S. M. Food and Volka Food International on the occasion of Quaid's day.

Today, on the birth anniversary of the founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, let us pledge to make our country a prosperous and dignified nation. We aim to unite our people and strengthen our nation.

This task can only be accomplished by working together. We must forget our differences and collaborate with each other. We need to work hard for the progress of our country. We must improve our education and economy. We must strive to see our country with pride on the global stage.

Let us all contribute to the development of Pakistan. Let's build a Pakistan that is a source of pride for us and sets an example for the world.

Nomination

Aamir Sheikh submits nomination papers for NA-47 seat despite tough times

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Despite the frightening challenges, several Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders including filed nomination papers to participate in the upcoming general elections.

PTI's Senior Vice President of Islamabad Region Muhammad Aamir Sheikh submitted nomination papers for the NA-47 constituency amid challenges in the wake of the high-handedness of law enforcement agencies.

Mr Sheikh lamented the haphazard submission of nomination papers, and shared two cents on incumbent authorities for allegedly failing to fulfil their constitutional responsibility of conducting free and fair elections. As PTI's legal woes mount,

Aamir Sheikh defies odds to take part in upcoming elections as the committed party member refused to jump ship or vie independently. He is facing several FIRs, but continue to stand with former premier as a stalwart in the political landscape, symbolizing resilience during times of coercion and adversity.

In his interaction with media persons, Mr Sheikh recalled PTT's struggle for rule of law in the country, but decried unprecedented developments occurring before the polls. After completion of process of filing nomination papers, scrutiny of all candidates has been started and ECP has formed appellate tribunals to hear objections against nominations filed for upcoming polls.



Protest

ISLAMABAD: Activists of Jammu Kashmir Pir Panjal Freedom Movement hold banners and shouting slogans during protest outside National Press Club against the Indian Forces inhumane behavior with Kashmiris and the murdering Kashmiri Youngsters at Poonch district of the IIOK.



Photo: Online by Raja Farid

Malik Abrar Hussain met to Imam Kaaba

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Imam Kaaba Sheikh Saleh bin Hameed meeting with Pakistan's renowned educationist Malik Abrar Hussain at his residence

During this time, a special prayer was offered for the development and prosperity of the Islamic world, especially Pakistan, and the improvement of the Muslim Ummah

In the meeting, the problems faced by the world of Islam were discussed, seeing the love of the Ummah makes one proud to be a Pakistani, Malik Abrar Hussain.

Malik Abrar Hussain, a well-known educationist of Pakistan and central president of All Pakistan Private Schools and Colleges Association, met Imam Kaaba Sheikh Saleh bin Hameed. On the occasion of this scheduled meeting at the residence of Imam Kaaba, Sheikh Saleh bin Hameed prayed for the development,



prosperity and improvement of Pakistan.

According to reports, the central president of All Paki-

stan Private Schools and Colleges Association, Malik Abrar Hussain, who is in Haram Pak with his family

these days to perform Umrah, met Imam e Kaaba Sheikh Saleh bin Hameed. In this regard, Malik Abrar Hussain said that he had a detailed discussion with Imam Kaaba regarding the problems facing the world of Islam and the unity of the Ummah, and Imam Kaaba prayed for the improvement, development and welfare of the Ummah on his request. Malik Abrar Hussain said that Pakistan is blessed with the prayers of scholars, saints and Muslims all over the world especially pray for the survival of this Islamic state established on the basis of Kalima e Tayyaba. Seeing the love and affection of the Muslim Ummah for Pakistan, he is proud to be Pakistani and he also pray that the Almighty Allah gives the power and courage to fulfill the hopes of the Ummah in the true sense. Malik Abrar Hussain thanked Imam Kaaba for his prayers and compassion.

AIOU to hold convocation on January 31

PNP

ISLAMABAD: The Convocation of Alama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) will be held on January 31, 2024, at the Jinnah Convention Center, Islamabad. The President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Dr. Arif Alvi, who is also the Chancellor of the University, will be the chief guest at the event. The ceremony will be hosted by the Vice Chancellor, AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood. Federal ministers, secretaries, senior officials of HEC, vice chancellors of various universities, rectors, renowned journalists, eminent social personalities, deans, professors, principal officers, faculty members, and students of AIOU will participate in convocation.

Convocation is the most important event of university, Vice Chancellor, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood has directed students to register for convocation till January 5 to ensure maximum participation. Graduates who have secured 70% marks in all degree programs from semester Autumn 2004 to semester Spring 2022 are eligible for registration. Students are directed to visit the convocation website convocation.aiou.edu.pk for registration and more information.

The administration of AIOU has completed preparations for the upcoming convocation ceremonies. The convocations will take place in Muzaffarabad and all the provincial capitals, including Karachi, Lahore, Quetta, and Peshawar. On January 31, 2024, students from Islamabad, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Rawalpindi Division (Attack, Chaklala, Jhelum, and Rawalpindi) will participate in the convocation ceremony held at Jinnah Convention Center in Islamabad. The convocation for the Karachi chapter is scheduled for March 3, 2024, while Lahore's convocation will be held on March 28. Quetta will host its ceremony on May 19, and the convocations for Peshawar and Muzaffarabad chapters are scheduled for June 9 and June 30, 2024, respectively. PhD graduates are required to register in Islamabad only. Students of MPhil programs will be awarded gold medals and degrees at the convocations held in their respective cities.

Javed Intizar endorses Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar for NA-47 and NA-48

PNP

ISLAMABAD: Former Independent Assembly candidate Javed Intizar announced his support for Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar, an independent candidate from Constituency NA-47 and NA-48, saying that there is harmony in his and my political thinking and ideas. There was a detailed discussion on the long-standing problems of the constituencies, including improvement in the education and health sector, construction of sports fields in remote areas, creation of employment opportunities by providing digital programs and laptops in community centers, relief to government employees. There was a coordinated strategy and solid planning to address other issues, including Dilwane. Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar said that he is raising his voice against the corrupt political system. With the support of Allah and the people, he will succeed and take revolutionary steps.



PAC organized photo exhibition to mark Quaid's Birthday



Bureau Chief

RAWALPINDI: On the occasion of the 147th birth anniversary of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, a photo exhibition titled 'Quaid-e-Azam Kay Shab o Rooz' was organized in Punjab Arts Council. Director Arts Council Waqar Ahmad was the chief guest of the exhibition. Addressing the participants of the exhibition, Chief Guest Waqar Ahmad said that Quaid-e-Azam fought for the Muslims on the basis of two-nation theory. Under the leadership of the father of the nation, Pakistan emerged as an independent state in 20th century. By following the teachings of Quaid-e-Azam, the nation can overcome the problems and difficulties of the present day. The reason for our downfall is that we forgot the edicts of Quaid-e-Azam. Currently, Pakistan is facing uncertainty. To solve it, we need to follow the words of Quaid-e-Azam, he added. Assistant Director Muhammad Suleman said that we are on the path of development in the field of literature and culture as per the vision of Quaid-e-Azam. We have to unite and reiterate our determination to stick to the teachings of Quaid-e-Azam. He said that in order to achieve progress, the principles of unity, faith and discipline of the leader must be followed. Portraits of Quaid-e-Azam and rare photographs of his life long journey were put on display in the

Pakistan People's Party-AJK celebrates Golden Jubilee of PSF

Bureau Chief

ISLAMABAD: President Pakistan People's Party Azad Kashmir Chaudhry Muhammad Yasin has said that today is a historic day in two respects, on the one hand, it is the birthday of the founder of Pakistan, on the other hand, we live on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of PSF, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari Convention is also a The fact is that PSF is the name of a movement which has made a history on every occasion. It is the most active wing of Pakistan People's Party which has raised the flag of Haq Sach even during martial law and faced oppression and jail. But these young people of ours are not hungry, they are not bent. PSF never compromised on its ideas. PSF played a key role in spreading Bhutto's philosophy. Chairman Organizing Committee and Member

CEO People's Party Chaudhry Parvez Ashraf, former President and Prime Minister Sardar Yaqub Khan, Chaudhry Riaz senior leader of People's Party, Secretary General Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, Secretary Information Sardar Javed Ayub, Organizer Pakistan People's Party Azad Kashmir Sardar Zia Qamar, Additional Secretary General Javed Iqbal Badhanvi, Government Minister Bazal Ali Naqvi, Government Ministers Chaudhry Qasim Majeed, Chaudhry Amir Yasin, Ms. Nabila Ayub, Central Vice President PPP Azad Kashmir Muhammad Afsar Shahid, Sahibzada Ashfaq Zafar, Sahibzada Zulfiqar Ali, Sardar Abd Hussain, Sardar Amjad Yusuf, Shaheen Kausar Dar, Sardar Saud Sadiq, Mohammad Waleed Iqbalani, Mubashir Munir Awan, Shaoukat Javed Mir Abdul Shakoor Siddique,

Aamir Bashir Iqbalani, Sardar Babrak Khan, Sardar Aftab Anjuman Advocate, Raja Yasin Khan, Chaudhry Fakhr Zaman, Rashid Islam Butt and others participated. Speaking at the event, President PPP Azad Kashmir Chaudhry Muhammad Yasin further said that the youth of PSF should play the role of the vanguard as always in the coming elections of Pakistan. You are the future of the nation. Learners from Wale Study Circle went ahead and held great positions. It is also the nursery of politicians and the guarantor of public rights and students' rights. It is the capital of Pakistan People's Party. You are also young, our leader, Chairman of Pakistan People's Party. Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is also young, under his leadership, play a full role in the general elections, success belongs to Pakistan People's Party, the future is yours.

DFP aghast over custodial killing of three Kashmiri civilians in Poonch

Abdul Majeed Tahir

ISLAMABAD: Srinagar: Jammu Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party (DFP) has strongly condemned the custodial killing of three Kashmiri civilians in Baffliar area of Poonch district of the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

In a statement issued here today, the DFP spokesman, advocate Arshad Iqbal, while terming the incident as a worst example of Indian state terrorism, said that slain civilians were subjected to third degree torture at a military camp by the Indian occupation Army.

He said that video clip of the Indian personnel torturing Kashmiri youth speaks volumes about the beastly and inhumane treatment Kashmiris were being subjected to.

He said the custodial killing serves as an eye opener for the world that has been watching the situation in Kashmir like a silent spectator.

Demanding an independent probe into the incident, the spokesman appealed the world community to play its much needed role to help stop the bloodbath of innocent Kashmiris and holding India accountable for the war crimes its forces have been committing against the Kashmiris.

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Benazir Bhutto Shaheed

The only female Prime Minister of Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto Shaheed is considered as one of the great leaders, she was concerned about the rights and welfare of Pakistani women. B. B Shaheed, in her autobiography says, "What I am proud of is that we are here in a society where the promotion of women's rights has been neglected for a long time and the world has openly mistreated them. I inducted several women in my cabinet and established the Ministry of Women's Development, we started women's education programs in universities. This ensured that women in prisons could get better access to legal advice and representation. We established the Women Development Bank to provide loans only to women and also provided facilities to women to take loans from regular banks. We created institutions for family planning, nutritional counseling, child labor and birth control. Legalized women's participation in international sports events. It was a solid start in a society where Islam was being used to suppress women's rights in society during a difficult decade. We have done this despite all the political and administrative hurdles. When I first went to the Prime Minister's Office, there was no other staff there except the Deputy Secretary. I had to immediately send a team to London to learn how the British Prime Minister's Office works so that my office could be fully operational. In addition, the files were not sent to me for several days, because the Cabinet Secretary was instructed to send the files to the Presidency. During the first period of my government, the most important problem was the situation in the neighboring

country of Afghanistan. When the Soviet Union occupied Afghanistan in 1979, it worked in partnership with the US to help Pakistan's Mujahideen. For the US, its status as a warlord strategy prompted it to intervene. The US saw a way to deprive the Soviet Union of its resources and leverage in Afghanistan and tried to take advantage of the botched invasion by the Soviet Union. The Afghans used Pakistan's ISI and army for their own purpose and waged a bloody war against Russia in Afghanistan which resulted in the downfall of Russia in 1990. In 1970, Afghanistan's President Daud supported a rebellion in Pakistan's tribal areas, which we responded to in the form of a counter-insurgency across the David line. Pakistan helped form the interim government with immediate withdrawal of Russian forces from Afghanistan. The generals recommended that we allow Afghan leader Sayyaf to remain as president and Hikmatyar as prime minister, I disagreed. I told the army that there should be a compromise between your ideas and the thinking of my government. I want to support a moderate as the president, you can make the prime minister of your choice. With our efforts, Afghan groups accepted President Mujadadi and Prime Minister Sayyaf as the Afghan interim government."

There were many reasons that ultimately Benazir Bhutto was assassinated on December 27, 2007 as part of a well-thought-out plan. PM Benazir Bhutto's

military secretary Lt. Gen. (ret'd) Abdul Qayyum has stated in his book, "The fact cannot be denied that the entire responsibility of Benazir Bhutto's safety was the government at the time. An important figure of the country who not only received death threats but also a regular murder attack had taken place at Karachi. It was a great criminal negligence to breach the security perimeters made for her defense at any time. An important person like Benazir, whether she is living in her house, traveling on road, in an airplane, addressing a public meeting or being present at a place of entertainment, the entire responsibility of her safety rests on the government. There is no doubt that whether Benazir Bhutto survived in Karachi or was martyred in Rawalpindi, it is clear that her killers tied suicide jackets on their bodies and carried grenades and pistols in their hands, breaking all the security circles. What kind of security was it that was running alongside the tires of the car? And it will not be correct to say that those whose responsibility was to defend Benazir's life were complicit with the hired killers in this heinous incident."

In the light of these facts, it is clear that a conspiracy was prepared in advance to derail a great leader like Benazir Bhutto, which was expressed by Sheikh Rashid, a politician from Rawalpindi, on the occasion of her visit to Punjab, had prematurely canceled and B. B was killed in his constituency. It has been 16 years since Benazir Bhutto's murder, hatred

is being filled in the minds of the youth against the PPP, while the Bhutto family proved by giving their lives that they are not only greedy for power, they can even sacrifice their lives to give rights to the people, the source of power. And this sentiment is not seen in the leaders of any other political party.

The late Malik Hakmeen Khan, a symbol of loyalty in the border district of Punjab bordering KPK province, kept the party flag high till his death, now his grandson Sahil Sramad is also sticking to his grandfather's mission. Dr. Sikandar Hayat, founder worker of PPP Attock, spent his entire life in loyalty to the party, now his son Sardar Ashar Hayat is the district president under whose leadership party organizations are working in all the tehsils of the district, especially under his leadership of the ladies wing under the chairmanship of Hajira Tabasum, women are working enthusiastically across the district. Sardar Zulfiqar Hayat Advocate, the younger son of Dr. Sikandar Hayat, is the candidate of the party from PP-2 Attock Provincial Constituency, who is working day and night for the party and committed to education, employment, health, sports promotion and employment opportunities for the people of his constituency. It is hoped that this family, whose third generation is in the field of action, will come to power and redress the deprivations of the people of the constituency as well as the workers and play their role in completing the mission of B. B Shaheed. Party related events have been going on in this family for a long time and on the occasion of B. B Shaheed's death anniversary, a grand event will be held on December 27.



Analysis

Shahid Awan

Israel's war on Gaza

Israel's aggression of the besieged Gaza Strip "has been unlike any other in the 21st century", with its occupation military forces dropping some of the largest bombs to decimate the Palestinian enclave, The Washington Post reported Sunday. The Post, in its report, "used data from the UN Satellite Center, or UNOSAT, which analyzes satellite imagery from conflict zones," to assess the massive devastation in Gaza.

Moreover, the report is based on interviews with more than "20 aid workers, health-care providers, and experts in munitions and aerial warfare". "The most ferocious attacks have come from the air, flattening entire city blocks and cratering the landscape," the report said. The Israeli invasion has caused the deaths of more than 20,000 people, most of them women and children; displaced over 1.2 million; and destroyed or damaged about half the buildings in the territory. "The Israelis have also pulverized something else: Gaza City's cultural riches and municipal institutions," lamented the Mayor of Gaza, Yahya R. Sarraj, who painted a vivid picture of the ravaged city in an op-ed published in The New York Times Sunday. Mayor Sarraj wrote, "The unrelenting destruction of Gaza — its iconic symbols, its beautiful seafont, its libraries and archives and whatever economic prosperity it had — has broken my heart. "The Gaza Zoo has been destroyed, with many of its animals killed or starved to death, including wolves, hyenas, birds and rare foxes. Other casualties include the city's main public library, the Children's Happiness Center, the municipal building and its archive, and the seventh-century Great Omari Mosque. Israeli forces have also damaged or destroyed streets, squares, mosques, churches and parks." Concluding with an emotional appeal, Mayor Sarraj called on the world's municipalities — everyone — to pressure world leaders to stop this mindless destruction. "Why can't Palestinians be treated equally, like Israelis and all other peoples in the world? Why can't we live in peace and have open borders and free trade?", he asked. "Palestinians deserve to be free and have self-determination. Gaza's emblem is the phoenix, which rises from the ashes. It insists on life." Meanwhile, The Washington Post investigation found that the Israeli army has conducted "repeated and widespread airstrikes" in the vicinity of hospitals and health-care facilities, which "are supposed to receive special protection under the laws of war." "Satellite imagery reviewed by Post reporters revealed dozens of apparent craters near 17 of the 28 hospitals in northern Gaza," the report stated, adding that ten craters "suggested the use of bombs weighing 2,000 pounds, the largest in regular use." The Post quoted former UN Special Rapporteur on Palestine, Michael Lynk, as saying that "the scale of Palestinian civilian deaths in such a short period of time appears to be the highest such civilian casualty rate in the 21st century."



Cartoon by Amjad Rasmī. (Courtesy of Asharq Al-Awsat)

Level Playing Field for Rioters? - II

Pakistan-China A fair playing field implies fairness within the bounds of democratic norms. However, extending this principle to those actively working against the state may inadvertently become a tool for the abuse of democratic principles. Anti-state elements may exploit the democratic process to further their agendas, using the very mechanisms designed to uphold democracy against itself. The

principles it upholds. Denying a fair playing field to anti-state elements is a measure in defense of democratic values and the preservation of the system itself.

For me, the country and the Pakistan Army are everything. The significance of the Pakistan Armed Forces for the country cannot be overstated. In an ever-changing and complex world, the armed forces play a crucial role in ensuring the security, stability, and prosperity of a nation. Beyond their primary function of defending against external threats, the Pak Army contributes significantly to various aspects of a country's development and global standing. Like any other army in the world, the primary role of the Pak Army is to safeguard a nation's sovereignty and protect its citizens from external threats. The Pak Army acts as a shield, deterring potential adversaries and ensuring that the country can respond effectively to any form of aggression. A strong and capable military is essential for maintaining peace and stability within our borders.

The Pakistan Army acts as a deterrent against potential adversaries, dissuading them from engaging in hostile activities. A well-equipped and trained military presence not only prevents conflicts but also contributes to global peace. Additionally, the Pak Army actively participates in peacekeeping missions, collaborating with international organizations to uphold stability in conflict-affected regions. Beyond their traditional roles, our armed forces play a pivotal role in providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief during natural calamities or emergencies. Their logistical capabilities, disciplined personnel, and organizational structure enable

them to respond quickly and effectively to crises, ultimately saving lives and minimizing damage. Investments in the armed forces positively impact the country's economy by generating employment opportunities, stimulating technological advancements, and fostering innovation. Furthermore, a secure and stable environment, facilitated by a robust military, promotes economic growth, attracting investments and fostering trade. The Pakistan armed forces often drive technological innovation, pushing the boundaries of research and development. Technologies initially developed for military purposes, such as GPS, the internet, and medical advancements, find applications in civilian life, contributing to progress and improving the quality of life for people. The Pakistan armed forces also play a crucial role in fostering a sense of national unity and pride. The commitment and sacrifice of military personnel create a bond among citizens, transcending regional, cultural, and socio-economic differences. The Pak Army serves as a symbol of the nation's strength and resilience, instilling collective pride in the country's achievements and values. A strong military enhances Pakistan's standing on the global stage, providing it with the capacity to influence diplomatic negotiations and international relations. The Pak Army contributes to alliances, engages in peacekeeping missions, and participates in cooperative defense efforts, strengthening the country's diplomatic position and fostering collaboration with other nations.

No country allows rioters to contest elections, irrespective of their popularity, as exemplified by the United States. The United States experienced an unprecedented event that sent shockwaves across the nation and reverberated globally—the Capitol Hill incident.

To be continued



Analysis

Abdul Basit Alvi

Perception of US versus China - II

The criticism from the US and the West towards CPEC is though baseless, reflects their frustration and appears driven by concerns over being sidelined from Pakistan's strides in progress and prosperity. They knew very well that the success of the CPEC could potentially set a precedent for similar initiatives in the region and globally, making the US and the West uneasy. Critiques against the CPEC seem largely unfounded, with concerns raised about Beijing's influence, debt accumulation, altered trade dynamics, environmental sustainability, and social repercussions lacking substantial basis. These criticisms, seemingly founded on fears of geopolitical shifts and China's enhanced presence, underline the multi-dimensional impact of the CPEC on the region.

The accusation of altering trade routes or imposing dominance by China in the context of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is baseless and lacks merit. Both China and Pakistan have extended invitations to countries across regions, including the Middle East and Europe, to actively participate as equal partners in the expansive Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Notably, this inclusive approach extends even to India and Afghanistan, offering them opportunities to join this transformative program. Such outreach negates the notion of China's intention to monopolize or manipulate trade routes. Instead, the BRI serves as a unifying platform that, when fully operational, connects the global community, minimizes distances, stimulates trade and investment, reduces transportation costs, and ensures year-round availability of essential commodities worldwide. By stabilizing prices and enhancing accessibility, this initiative fosters equal opportunities for all participating nations to progress and thrive, presenting a vision of shared development and prosperity on a global scale.

The perception of the US in Pakistan is tainted by a complex history of fluctuating alliances, military interventions, controversial drone strikes,

and a sense of conditional aid driven by perceived self-interest. These experiences have bred skepticism, undermining trust and sovereignty. In contrast, China's resonance in Pakistan is rooted in an enduring friendship characterized by non-interference, respectful bilateral relations, and unwavering support sans conditions. Tangible investments, notably through transformative projects like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), have bolstered economic development and infrastructure visibly, fostering genuine goodwill. China's consistent collaboration during Pakistan's challenges without ulterior motives has solidified the perception of a true partnership, painting a sharp contrast to the perceived interests and interventions associated with the US-Pakistan relationship.

My advice to him in reply to his question; how to improve the deeply entrenched negative perception of the US in Pakistan was straightforward: Emulate the Chinese model. Reflect on why China is embraced and cherished by the people of Pakistan. Consider why the Pakistani leadership, both civilian and military, find comfort in dealings with China, and why there's inherent trust in this relationship. Evaluate why the bond between China and Pakistan remains resilient despite changes in government or shifts in bureaucratic structures.

Furthermore, the key lies in initiating projects in Pakistan that are tangible, visible, and directly improve the lives of ordinary citizens. Importantly, refrain from meddling in Pakistan's domestic politics and internal affairs. To recalibrate the bilateral relationship, it's essential to approach it as equals rather than fostering a dynamic of servant and master. This shift toward mutual respect and visible, impactful projects can pave the way for a more positive perception and a stronger bond between the US and Pakistan like it did between China and Pakistan.

M. Qamar Bashir is Former Press Secretary to the President, Former Press Minister to the Embassy of Pakistan to France, Former MD, SRBC



Analysis

Qamar Bashir

Kazakhstan's exports to EAEU countries increase by 90%

Saniya Sakenova

ASTANA: Kazakhstan's exports to the countries of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) increased by 90% from \$5.1 billion in 2015 to \$9.7 billion in 2022, Minister of Trade and Integration Arman Shakkaliyev said on Dec. 25 in the Mazhilis, the lower chamber of the Kazakh Parliament, the ministry's press service reported.

In seven years, Kazakhstan's mutual trade with partners grew 74% from \$16.3 billion in 2015 to \$28 billion at the end of 2022.

As for this year, the country removed ten barriers, including eliminating unequal conditions when collecting VAT for agricultural machinery in the Kyrgyz Republic, lifting restrictions



on access to pharmacies for medicines from the EAEU countries in Belarus, and removing a barrier in government

procurement for machine tool products in Russia.

According to Shakkaliyev, gener-

al criteria for industrial processing have been developed for about 450 commodity items in 17 industries to ensure mutual access to procurement by EAEU countries.

Besides that, the list of goods with a certificate of origin has been expanded by 173 items, which is expected to boost Kazakhstan's exports to partner countries' markets with a volume of over \$100 billion annually.

The minister spoke about prospects that open up for agreements on a free trade zone with third countries. The agreements increased trade turnover with Iran by 38% to \$521 million over three years, a three-fold growth with Serbia up to \$73.8 million over the year, and a 2.5-fold rise with Vietnam to \$525.7 million over seven years.

KCEU's Chair Ali Raza Syed for preventing custodial killings in occupied Kashmir

Sohail Anjum Malik

BRUSSELS: Chairman Kashmir Council Europe (KCEU) Ali Raza Syed has urged the international community to its role to stop and custodial killings and other extra judicial murders of the Kashmiri civilians by Indian authorities in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

Strongly condemning the barbaric custodial killing of three Kashmiri civilians in Baffliaz area of Poonch district of the occupied Kashmir, in a statement he said, extra judicial murders of Kashmiris should be immediately stopped.

It is important to mention that three civilians Mohammad Showkat 22, Shabir Ahmad 32 and Safer Hussain 45 were tortured to death in the Indian Army's custody at a military torture cell in the Poonch district on Friday morning. Expressing deep regret and sorrow over killing of three civilians, he said, we are shocked that three innocent Kashmiris were detained and tortured to death by the Indian military. Then their grieving relatives received their mutilated bodies. He added, deaths of these three Kashmiris became cause of anger not only among people in IIOJK but also among the Kashmiris living Azad Kashmir and other parts of the world.

He said, the Modi government has broken all records of atrocities to suppress the Kashmiris' just struggle for right to self-determination in the occupied territory of disputed land of Jammu and Kashmir. Chair of KCEU said, however this terrible incident exposed once again the Indian ruthless state of terrorism in IIOJK. Ali Raza Syed said, these extra judicial killing is a part of Indian plot for genocide of the oppressed people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Ali Raza Syed warned that India should remember that so far, it could not defeat the passion of the Kashmiri people and they would continue their struggle till their complete success. The Kashmiris' freedom movement would be continued, and the people of Kashmir would take it to its logical conclusion at all costs.

Chair of KCEU urged the international community to take serious notice of the war crimes committed by Indian security forces against innocent Kashmiris. He called for an Independent international investigation into the all the extra judicial killings including this brutal custodial killing. So that the perpetrators of these custodial killings must be held accountable and brought to the real sentence through fair justice.

Ali Raza Syed called the International Community to play its notable role for giving right to self-determination to the people of Jammu and Kashmir and Kashmir issue should be resolved through UN's resolutions.



Ice rink

People skate at the "Pioneer" ice rink in Vladivostok, Russia. "Pioneer", the largest ice rink in Russia's Far East city of Vladivostok, opened to the public on Monday.



Photo: Guo Feizhou/Xinhua

US, its allies major hurdle to halting Israeli atrocities in Gaza: Iran

Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian has termed the United States and "some of its allies" as primary impediments to attempts to stop the killing of Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip.

He said while speaking at the Tehran International Conference on Palestine which was organised to rally support for the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, Tehran Times reported.

Hamas on October 7 killed about 1,140 people in Israel, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on Israeli figures.

Israel responded with a withering offensive that has killed more than 20,000 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to the territory's health ministry.

Across China: Traditional Tibetan dance swings its way into urban life

Xinhua

CHENGDU: At a public square in Chengdu, a bustling city of over 20 million people in southwestern China, 24-year-old Tibetan dancer Yanggyi, prepared for her performance, adjusting her traditional attire and the bun behind her head.

As the tune of a Tibetan love song permeated the night air, she entered the dance floor, initiating a vibrant Guozhuang dance party.

Guozhuang, which means singing and dancing in a circle, is a traditional Tibetan dance. During leisure time, Tibetans of all ages often gather in circles, gracefully dancing to the rhythmic beats.

Since the 1980s, Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan Province, has become a preferred destination for people relocating from within the province and neighboring regions, thanks to

its favorable climate and vibrant economy.

While embracing urban life, an increasing number of Tibetans also brought the Guozhuang dance as well as other cultural heritages to the city. As a result, the art form began to make its way into the lives of many urbanites.

In 2014, Yanggyi, at the age of 15, moved from Jinchuan County in Aha Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture to Chengdu. After completing her university studies, she became a kindergarten teacher in the city.

Nine years of life in Chengdu has seen her transition from a teenager in the Tibetan community into a young adult pursuing a career in the city, with Guozhuang serving as the enduring link to her hometown.

Although not professionally trained in dance, Yanggyi considers Guozhuang an intrinsic



part of her cultural identity. "Dance is, in my view, the mother of all languages as it can express so many emotions," she said.

In 2021, Yanggyi, along with like-minded people, formed a Guozhuang dance group. Starting with just seven members, the group gained popularity through word of mouth and the power of the internet, attracting a large number of dancing enthusiasts.

Today, Yanggyi's dance group has become one of the most popular Guozhuang dance troupes in Chengdu, boasting 420,000 followers on social media. People travel from Beijing and Shanghai, and even foreign countries to see their performances.

During each dance performance, Yanggyi and her teammates wear Hadas, traditional Tibetan silk scarves symbolizing purity and auspiciousness,

with the dance floor flooding with flowers from the appreciative audience.

"We aim to bring joy and relaxation while allowing others to experience the charm of our Tibetan culture," Yanggyi said.

In today's Chengdu, Guozhuang is becoming a new cultural phenomenon, creating waves on social media. Liu Rongping, a 60-year-old resident, is a fervent Guozhuang enthusiast who has enrolled in three dance classes and owns six sets of traditional Tibetan costumes.

"Keeping dancing Guozhuang and refraining from mahjong is my recipe for happiness," Liu said.

Looking ahead, Yanggyi said she wishes that her teammates maintain their love for Guozhuang. "I hope I can take the team to bigger stages for more people to appreciate and enjoy."

Saudi Arabia's development ambitions present huge opportunities for Pakistan

When speaking of developmental change in Saudi Arabia, a narrative unfolds that holds space for proactive endeavors originating from Pakistan. Positioned as a vital bridge connecting the two nations, Pakistan's role becomes significant in not only catalyzing new opportunities but also fostering collaborations that transcend geographical boundaries.

From the details of Vision 2030 to the visionary NEOM project, the ambitious Red Sea endeavor and strategic economic zones, there is a need for discourse on the unprecedented transformation unfolding in the Kingdom and the opportunities it presents for Pakistan. Today, Riyadh is the most happening place in the world as far as investments and economic development are concerned.

During the time I was Pakistan's Minister for Investment, I seized the opportunity to engage with Saudi leadership, orchestrating a total of 18 meetings focused on investment prospects. The objective was clear — to encourage KSA to consider substantial investments in the promising economic landscape of Pakistan, which can comfortably gain a few billion dollars' worth of investment annually from KSA on a sustainable basis.

Saudi Arabia is on a transformative journey, driven by its ambitious Vision 2030 initiative. From massive infrastructure investments to pivotal economic reforms, the nation's trajectory reflects a commitment to sustainable growth, innovation and global prominence. Over the next two decades, the world will witness a complete metamorphosis of KSA in all facets — from infrastructural development to cultural evolution. Saudi Arabia will be a powerhouse in every sector of their economy.

A significant aspect of this transformative vision is Saudi Arabia's successful bid to host the World Expo 2030 in Riyadh. They have engaged the best global resources for planning and designing the overall roadmap for the global event.

Recently, at KSA's first-ever annual investment meet-up in Asia — the Asia Future Investment Initiative (AFII) Priority in Hong Kong — the gathering emerged as a crucial platform featuring the participation of global investors from 45 countries with a notable 90% hailing from Asian nations. This served as a pivotal opportunity to delve into the intricacies of investment inflows and outflows surrounding Saudi Arabia.

The anticipated surge in PIF's project CapEx, from USD 70 billion in 2023 to USD 175 billion annually between 2025-2028, signals a substantial boost

to the non-oil GDP. Against this backdrop, top investors from diverse nations, particularly Asia, provided a comprehensive briefing to the Saudi leadership on investment opportunities.

The Saudi Arabian commitment to development is exemplified by its substantial capital expenditure plan, earmarking up to USD 0.9 trillion over the next decade. A focal point of this plan is the Expo 2030 initiative, where Riyadh takes center stage as the host city. The allocation of 1% of the overall CapEx to Expo 2030 underscores its significance in the broader scheme of large-scale projects.

The robust credit demand in Saudi Arabia is underscored by the pipeline of un-awarded projects, estimated at USD 1.1 trillion. PIF's substantial investment plans contribute significantly to credit demand, with local banks, especially corporate banks, positioned for growth.

Mega projects like Al Ula, the Red Sea Project, NEOM and The Line are going to be instrumental in transforming Saudi Arabia's landscape. These projects, with their focus on sustainability, luxury tourism and technological advancements, contribute significantly

to economic growth and job creation.

In the tumultuous landscape of Pakistan's economic scenario, the recent withdrawal of major players like Shell and Telenor speaks volumes about the deficiencies in our short-term policies. This stark reality serves as an urgent wake-up call, signalling the dire need for a profound shift towards robust, long-term strategies that can resuscitate

investor confidence and stimulate both domestic and foreign investments. Among these challenges, it is imperative to acknowledge the reality that Saudi Arabia, while serving as a beacon of hope in terms of successful models of transformation, is no longer ready to collaborate based on aid and subsidies.

Pakistan needs a charter for business for the next 20 years with sanctity as crucial as that of a constitution. This charter must have the stamp of the Parliament and the National Security Council. It needs to be above any political proof or bias. The planning must be fool-proof, including the will and vision of all stakeholders, covering the 'investment climate' with future projections and margins for disruption. The objec-

tive of policymaking needs to be facilitation for investors and enhancing the attractiveness of Pakistan as the best investment opportunity.

There is a need for an overhaul of the system and massive restructuring of institutions such as the Board of Investment (BOI), the Privatization Commission and a few others. Pakistan's BOI remains non-performing, not only because of the lack of permanent leadership but also due to an obsolete inherent infrastructure that has inbuilt delays for the recruitment of competent teams and quick decisions.

The 'BOI Ordinance' requires amendments to enhance its productivity, enabling the recruitment of the best talent from across the landscape. In my opinion, the real and long-term solution is the robust restructuring and empowerment of the BOI, like our counterparts in the CARs, ASEAN, and ME. The BOI must become an agile, standardized, one-window operation for investors, as that will guarantee continuity, transparency and accountability.

The only visible difference between the BOI and the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) is the official role of the military and the induction of senior military officials into the SIFC. Instead of positioning the BOI as a separate entity with a distinct council controlling its affairs, it would be better

to have the military collaborate with the BOI. This collaboration can facilitate investments from GCC countries, closing the loop with the completion of projects. The same structure can also facilitate other countries.

I recognize a potential interest from Saudi Arabia's leadership in investing in Pakistan. To capitalize on this opportunity, it's essential to present them with well-defined projects supported by comprehensive feasibility studies. In this context, I believe in the principle that investors must be encouraged and facilitated, and investment must be grasped at the 'right time.' Investment is like water; it flows away if not productively engaged within the stipulated time. It is incumbent upon us to proactively leverage this opportunity, presenting compelling projects across various sectors to secure a substantial share of investments.

The acknowledgment extended to the leadership of Saudi Arabia, and particularly Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman is not merely a formality but a recognition of a transformative vision that can serve as a guiding light for Pakistan's metamorphosis. (Courtesy Arab News)

- The writer is a former minister of state and chairman Board of Investment. @mazfarahsan



Analysis

Muhammad Azfar Ahsan

RCCI celebrates Quaid's 147th birth anniversary

PPA

RAWALPINDI: A cake-cutting ceremony in connection with the 147th birth anniversary of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah was held at Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) here on Monday.

Speaking on the occasion, RCCI President and Chairman RWMC, Saqib Rafiq said that the objective of inheriting a prosperous Pakistan to the next generation can only be possible by complying with Quaid's motto of Unity, Faith and Discipline.

Saqib Rafiq emphasized the business community, youth and members of the RCCI to adopt Quaid's attributes of honesty, hard work, perseverance and dedication. "We have to work together and give a better and prosperous Pakistan for future generations".

Group leader Sohaih Altaf said that with the difficulties that Pakistan is facing today, it is the responsibility of every individual to become sincere to his country and devote his services to the building of the country.

Senior Vice President RCCI Muhammad Hamza Sarosh, Vice President Faisal Shahzad, Former Presidents Kashif Shabbir, Zahid Latif Khan, Executive Committee Members, representatives from the trade associations, Sheikh Hafeez, Arshad Awan, Chaudhry Akram and distinguished members of RCCI were also present on the occasion.

DPO, DC Prayed for departed souls of martyred laborers in SWL.

Adam Khan Wazir

WANA: On Monday, District Police Officer Farman Ullah and Deputy Commissioner Nasir Khan Lower South Waziristan visited the homes of the laborers who were martyred in the under-construction police post in Dazaghundai area of Wana.

On the occasion of condolence and prayed for departed souls to the bereaved, District Police Officer and DC Lower Waziristan assured about the package and said that a written letter will be sent to the provincial government in this regard.

District Police Officer Farman Ullah had more to say, a case under (ATA) 7 has been registered in the CTD police department against the miscreants involved in the incident.

While giving justice to the families of the victims, he said that all the family members should be satisfied.

He said, all security agencies are jointly conducting intelligence based operations against terrorists, which will continue until the end of the last terrorist. On this occasion, DC Nasir Khan and DPO Farman Ullah assured all kinds of cooperation from the families of the deceased.

District Police Officer Farman Ullah termed the news circulating on social media as fabricated and baseless that the martyred laborers do not belong to Punjab but to Shakai valley of Lower South Waziristan District. He said, We will never forget our martyrs. Both the officers said that the police and the district administration share their grief with their families, their blood will not go in vain.

Where do billionaires like Jeff Bezos spend holidays?

As the festive season unfolds, the world's wealthiest individuals are charting diverse courses for their holiday escapades, transforming the globe's most exclusive destinations into playgrounds for the elite.

From opulent ski retreats in Aspen to lavish beachfront in St Barts, billionaires are curating unique experiences for their holiday getaways.

Nicole Pollard Bayme, founder of luxury styling firm LaLaLuxe, notes that many affluent individuals opt to spend Christmas at their secondary residences, be it a sprawling ranch in Wyoming or a palatial beach mansion in Martha's Vineyard.

These grand spaces become gathering hubs for families, complete with extravagant gifts flown in and meticulously arranged beneath the towering Christmas tree.

For those captivated by winter wonderlands, Aspen reigns supreme, attracting billionaires like Jeff Bezos and Michael Dell. Winston Chesterfield, founder of luxury-focused consulting firm Barton, highlights other hotspots like Lake Tahoe and Vail in the US, while Europe boasts premier ski destinations such as Gstaad, Verbier, Kitzbühel, and Courchevel 1850.

Courchevel 1850, in particular, has welcomed A-list VIPs like David and Victoria Beckham, Elton John, and members of the British royal family.

Chesterfield explains that these ultrawealthy individuals seek destinations with established towns offering high-end experiences, like Kitzbühel's Zuma restaurant or Courchevel's Cheval Blanc hotel.

For those craving sun-kissed shores, the Caribbean beckons. St Barts, a New Year's Eve hotspot, has hosted luminaries like Jeff Bezos and his fiancée Lauren Sánchez, along with yachts owned by David Geffen, Sergey Brin, Bernard Arnault, and Barry Diller with Diane Von Furstenberg.

Power sector

New tactics adopted to rob electricity consumers

Tariq Khattak

ISLAMABAD: Former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt, said on Monday that the power sector has become a problem for the people and the business community.

The electricity price is increasing continuously, while new tactics are being adopted to rob consumers, which we strongly condemn, he said.

Shahid Rasheed Butt said in a statement issued here today that in the recent electricity bills, the due date has been changed from the 25th of the month to the 22nd, which will force millions of customers to pay a collective penalty of billions of rupees.

He said that banks were closed on the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth of this month due

to the holidays; therefore, the bill payment date should be extended to December 27 and penalties should be abolished.

The business leader said that people are already worried about inflation, and the ever-increasing cost of electricity is bankrupting them while businesses are facing a disaster.

Production and exports of the country's largest textile industry are also continuously falling due to the wrong policy of increasing power tariffs, he said.

Shahid Rasheed Butt said that by increasing the price of electricity continuously, its use is decreasing, but the government is forced to pay the power plants according to their production capacity.

He noted that the entire burden of wrong policies will be put on the public as usual, which is unfortunate.

Shahid Rashid Butt said that people are



not responsible for corruption and mismanagement in the power sector, but they are punished, which is sad.

NEPRA has decided to increase the electricity rates by more than Rs 3 per unit as part of the October fuel adjustment that will

be charged in December bills, which means that consumers will be charged despite lower electricity consumption in December.

He said that the increase in electricity prices is being done at a time when there have been revelations of overbilling in electricity supply.

Everyone is concerned about household budgets and the current state of the economy, which is being affected by skyrocketing charges for utility services, especially electricity.

The tough conditions have cast a looming shadow over the economy, underscoring the need to find a holistic solution, and, surprisingly, various government initiatives to address the pressing issues have been lacking direction.

The practice of robbing consumers should be stopped immediately, and instead of putting them in more trouble, they should be given relief, he demanded.

Protest

HYDERABAD: Members of Government Retired Teachers Association hold a protest rally in the favor of their demands, in City.



Photo: Online

PRGMEA, Customs hold interactive session to facilitate garment exporters



PNP

LAHORE: The Pakistan Readymade Garments Manufacturers & Exporters held an interactive session in collaboration with the Model Customs Collectorate to facilitate the exporters to enhance value-added textile exports, contributing in the economic uplift of the country.

The interactive session was participated by a number of PRGMEA members. Customs Collector Ms. Azmat Tahira along with her team including Ms. Farah Farooq, Deputy Collector Customs Ms. Syeda Sidra, ADC Additional Deputy Collector Customs, briefed the exporters about various issues including Rebate Calculations, Pending DTRE Cases, Bonded Warehouse Soft Clearance, Vender Registration for EFS, HS Code Approval, Maintenance of Customs Record in Duplicate both in manual and electronic and Access of different Analysis Certificate etc.

PRGMEA Central Chairman Mubashar Naseer Butt, addressing the meeting, said that enhancing exports is the only way for Pakistan to achieve sustainable growth,

as Pakistan's balance of payment sustainability depends on innovation and diversity in the structure of the economy.

PRGMA North chairman Ahmed Hanif, addressing the meeting said the country needs to diversify its export market as more than 50 percent of our exports rely only on four markets i.e. USA, EU, China and Afghanistan, he said and added that the government should help the industry make a difference in diversifying the market.

Ahmed Hanif thanked the Customs officials for taking their precious time and introducing the new systems and answering member's queries. He also said that in order to increase our exports it is imperative that both public and private sectors should join hands and hold such discussions regularly for the benefit of exporters.

On this occasion, the Customs Collector Azmat Tahira, assured the PRGMEA members of removing the glitches in all kinds of Customs facilitation schemes to make them business friendly with a view to improve the inflows of foreign exchange in the country.

CCP Chairman attends OECD Global Forum on Competition

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) Dr. Kabir Ahmed Sidhu participated in the Global Forum on Competition. It was held by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on 7-8 December 2023 in Paris. The Forum brought together heads of competition authorities from over 110 countries worldwide.

Chairman Sidhu also acted as a moderator in the breakout session on "Use of Economic Evidence in Cartel Cases on how can competition authorities effectively communicate



economic evidence in court and to non-experts." The other speakers in the session were Cristina Camacho, Head of Cabinet and Head of International Relations, Portuguese Competition Authority, and John Davies, Member, Competition Appeal Tribunal, United Kingdom.

In his remarks, Chairman Sidhu highlighted the CCP's shift from traditional evidence-gathering methods, such as dawn raids, to a more proactive approach. The

Commission has introduced a new Market Intelligence Unit (MIU) to leverage advanced technology and data analytics. The MIU aims to assess market data effectively, identifying collusive practices and enhancing the Commission's enforcement capabilities, he said.

He emphasized that given the increased market concentration and higher vertical integration in Pakistan's markets, establishing a dedicated department for data gathering and analysis became imperative. The creation of this department will effectively address challenges in gathering cartel evidence.

Mineral Sector Potential of Pakistan

The mineral sector has contributed to the economic development of many countries including China, Italy, Turkiye, Spain, and Brazil. The exploitation of mineral resources creates multiple benefits to an economy including employment creation, increase in income level, trade and export promotion, and acceleration in the economic growth of a country.

Pakistan is endowed with around 92 types of minerals out of which 52 are commercially exploited. The main minerals include coal-185 billion tons, lead zinc over 23 million tons, copper around 6000 million tons, chromites over 2.5 million tons, gold over 1.6 million tons, silver over 600 million tons, iron ore over 1400 million tons, salt around 10 billion tons, aragonite/marble over 295 billion tons and gypsum around 4.8 billion tons. Pakistan has the world's second-largest salt mines, second-largest coal deposits, fifth-largest copper & gold reserves, and billions of barrels of crude oil. However, despite possessing such enormous mineral resources, the mineral sector's contribution to Pakistan's GDP is just around 2.5 to 3 percent, which is negligible. The development of the mineral sector in Pakistan has been hindered by inadequate infrastructure, a lack of modern technology, and insufficient financial resources.

The GoP organized the first-ever Pakistan Minerals Summit in August 2023 to highlight the economic poten-

tial of the mineral sector. The Summit was attended by many distinguished guests from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Azerbaijan, and many other countries. The panel discussions in the Summit deliberated on the present potential, available technology, opportunities for investment for foreign parties, future roadmap, and development of allied communities of the region. The summit concluded with a firm resolve to continue untiring efforts for the development of the mining sector. The stakeholders made commitments to provide a business-friendly environment, overcome red tape, and introduce one-window operations for investors in the mineral sector.

Pakistan needs to follow the commitments with solid steps to exploit the actual potential of the mineral sector for the economic development of the country. The following steps can help the country to transform the mineral sector into a driving force for the economy:

The government should invest in technology and exploration initiatives. More funds should be allocated for geological surveys and exploration to identify new mineral deposits. The GoP should encourage and facilitate public-private partnerships in the mineral sector and take measures to attract more foreign investment.

Investing in advanced mining technologies can help a lot to improve efficiency and productivity in the mineral sector and reduce costs.

The lack of better infrastructure is a major hurdle in the exploitation of mineral resources. The GoP should take measures to develop and upgrade infrastructure, including transportation, to facilitate the movement of minerals from mining sites to ports. It will help promote mechanized mining and make exports

more competitive and attractive to international buyers.

The GoP should take policy measures to create a predictable, stable and transparent regulatory framework to attract foreign investors in the mineral sector. Transparent and consistent policies will encourage long-term investments in the mining sector. The GoP should focus on streamlining the permit system to reduce delays and bureaucratic hurdles in the grant of permits for mining projects.

Pakistan can earn billions of dollars from the export of value-added mineral products. To realize this goal, the GoP should encourage the development of downstream industries that help add value to raw minerals. Pakistan mostly exports raw minerals. However, processing minerals into intermediate or finished products will bring more lucrative results to the country than

exporting raw minerals. Investing in research and development will help explore new applications for minerals, and foster innovation and diversification.

Pakistan is currently focusing on a few traditional markets for the export of minerals. However, the GoP should cooperate with the private sector in identifying and targeting new markets for mineral exports. For this purpose, diplomatic efforts should be involved to establish trade agreements or partnerships with countries experiencing high demand for the minerals Pakistan produces. Conducting market research is also important to understand the specific requirements and preferences of target markets.

The world is getting more sensitive about the environmental impact of mineral exploitation. Therefore, Pakistan needs to adhere to international environmental and social standards in mining practices. With the use of advanced technology, responsible and sustainable mining practices should be used to enhance the country's credibility and reputation in the global market as a responsible state that will also attract environmentally conscious investors.

The exploitation of mineral resources is a skilled-intensive job. The GoP should accord high priority to producing skilled workforce by investing in education and training programs for the mining sector. A skilled workforce will help in efficient, productive and safe mining operations.

The mineral sector is vulnerable

to many risks including volatility in commodity prices, geopolitical risks, political instability, and economic uncertainties. It is, therefore, important for the GoP to implement risk mitigation strategies to address such challenges. The creation of financial instruments or insurance mechanisms to hedge against such risks can help mitigate risks in this sector.

Pakistan needs to showcase the export potential of its mineral resources in the potential markets. This can be done by actively promoting Pakistan's minerals in international markets. Pakistan should ensure participation in international trade shows, exhibitions, and conferences to highlight the export potential of its minerals.

It is important to attract the private sector towards the exploitation of mineral resources. One of the best options to do this is to provide financial incentives, tax breaks, or subsidies to attract investors in the mining sector. The GoP should provide cooperation and support to the private sector in playing a significant role in exploiting the mineral resources.

To conclude, Pakistan needs to develop a comprehensive strategy encompassing various factors and engaging stakeholders from the government, private sector, and local communities. Moreover, periodic reviews and adjustments to policies based on evolving market dynamics will help ensure long-term success.

The writer is working for a trade body in Pakistan.

Celebration

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi, First Lady Begum Samina Arif Alvi and federal ministers cutting cake to celebrate the 147th birth anniversary of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, at Aiwan-e-Sadron on Monday.



Photo: PID

President urges children to achieve high academic goals, adopt Quaid's principles

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Monday urged children to contribute to the country by achieving high standards in education and adopting the Quaid-e-Azam's principles of unity, faith, and discipline.

In an event titled 'Quaid and Children', the president said adhering to the golden values of the founder of Pakistan would make the country prosper in the comity of nations.

The colourful ceremony held here at the Presidency to celebrate the birth

anniversary of the Quaid-e-Azam was attended by First Lady Samina Alvi, ministers, parliamentarians, and a large number of school children including the differently-abled ones.

President urges children to achieve high academic goals, adopt Quaid's principles

President Alvi recalled that during the Pakistan Movement, children were also among the population who loved their Quaid and steadfastly stood with him in his struggle for a separate homeland.

He read out a few passion-

ate letters written by children to the Quaid-e-Azam where they penned their support to him besides sending him the money collected after savings.

The president said Quaid-e-Azam was a strong believer in mainstreaming women and other marginalized segments of society to ensure economic prosperity.

He emphasized providing equal opportunities to women and differently-abled people in the fields of education and employment.

He said the Quaid-e-Azam created this country with utmost dedication and

commitment and stressed that it was the responsibility of every citizen to play a part in its development.

President Alvi mentioned that the people in Kashmir were suffering at the hands of Indian occupation forces while the religious minorities faced continued persecution.

"The current situation in India reinforces the significance of the Two-Nation theory that necessitated the creation of a separate homeland for the Muslims of the Indian sub-continent," he said.

He said Quaid-e-Azam

Muhammad Ali Jinnah was a great leader whose struggle led to bringing a change in the world.

"This homeland was created after the sacrifices of thousands of people and it needs to be strengthened with hard work and commitment," he said.

President Alvi and Samina Alvi cut the cake to celebrate the birthday of the Quaid-e-Azam among children.

The children clad in traditional dresses danced to the tunes of folk songs depicting the rich culture of the four provinces and Kashmir.

Pervaiz Khattak claims was offered 'bat' symbol but he declined

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) head Pervaiz Khattak claimed that he was offered 'bat' as an election symbol but he declined that offer.

Talking to media in Peshawar, the former chief minister KP said that PTI founder Imran Khan thinks of the people of KP as fools however he was in power but didn't meet the finances of the province.

He lambasted former PM

Khan, saying he propagated development but his real agenda was to spread anarchy.

Khattak maintained that he wants development in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and no confrontation with state institutions.

ECP refutes reports of allocating 'bat' symbol to any party

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has provided clarification, asserting that the Bat symbol has not been allocated to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Parliamentarians.

In an official statement released on

Monday evening, the spokesperson for the ECP clarified that the Bat symbol has not been granted to PTI-P or any other political party.

Earlier today, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Parliamentarians (PTI-P) head Pervaiz Khattak claimed that he was offered 'bat' as an election symbol but he declined that offer.

Ukraine seeks to terminate free trade deal with Belarus

Reuters

KYIV: Ukraine's government has proposed to parliament terminating a free trade agreement with Belarus, which supports Russia's invasion of Ukraine that began in February 2022, cabinet minister Taras Melnychuk said on Monday.

The move to cancel the agreement was taken "in connection with a fundamental change of circumstances.... involvement of the Republic of Belarus in the illegal use of force against Ukraine", he said on the Telegram messaging app.

The government proposes terminating the free trade agreement of Decem-



ber 1992 and two protocols related to the treaty. After Russia's invasion, Ukraine suspended its trade relations with Minsk.

Under Ukrainian law, interstate agreements must be terminated by parlia-

ment. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Belarus remained one of Ukraine's main trading partners, supplying significant amounts of fuel and fertilisers to Kyiv.

Israeli airstrikes kill 100 in one of war's deadliest nights, Gaza officials say

News Desk

GAZA: At a funeral in Gaza on Monday a line of Palestinians touched white shrouds containing the bodies of at least 70 people who Palestinian health officials said were killed by an Israeli airstrike targeting Maghazi in the centre of the besieged strip.

It came after one of the enclave's deadliest nights in the 11-week-old battle between Israel and Hamas. One man hugged a dead child and others were hysterical.

"The strikes were at 2. The walls and the curtains fell on us," said one man. "I reached down to my four-year-old child but all I found were rocks."

Strikes that began hours before midnight persisted into Monday. Palestinian media said Israel stepped



up air and ground shelling in central Gaza with local residents saying they had lived one of their worst nights since the war began.

Health ministry spokesperson Ashraf Al-Qidra said many of those killed at Maghazi were women and children. Eight others were killed as Israeli planes and tanks carried out dozens of air strikes on houses and roads in nearby al-Bureij and al-Nuseirat, health officials said.

Medics added that an Israeli airstrike in Khan

Younis in southern Gaza killed 23, bringing total Palestinian fatalities overnight to more than 100.

Pope Francis said in his Christmas message on Monday that children dying in wars, including in Gaza, are the "little Jesuses of today" and that Israeli strikes were reaping an "appalling harvest" of innocent civilians.

Several residents made pleas on social media for people to afford them shelter as they have become homeless after leaving their homes

in Bureij.

"I have 60 people in the house, people who arrived at my house believing that central Gaza area was safe. Now we are searching for a place to go to," said Odeh, a resident of the refugee camps.

The Israeli army said it was reviewing the report of a Maghazi incident and was committed to minimising harm to civilians. Hamas denies the Israeli charge that it operates in densely populated areas or uses civilians as human shields.

The Palestinian Red Crescent published footage of wounded residents being transported to hospitals. It said Israeli warplanes were bombing main roads, hindering the passage of ambulances and emergency vehicles.

In his Christmas Day "Urbi et Orbi" (to the city

and world) address, Francis also called the Oct. 7 attack on Israel by Hamas militants "abominable" and again appealed for the release of around 100 hostages still being held in Gaza.

Clergy cancelled celebrations in Bethlehem, the Israeli-occupied Palestinian West Bank city where Christian tradition says Jesus was born in a stable 2,000 years ago.

Palestinian Christians held a candle-lit Christmas vigil in Bethlehem with hymns and prayers for peace in Gaza, instead of the usual celebrations.

There was no large tree, the usual centrepiece of Bethlehem's Christmas observances. Nativity figurines in churches were placed amid rubble and barbed wire in solidarity with the people of Gaza.

PPP to form next govt, says Zardari



Bureau Report

NAWAB SHAH: Former president and Pakistan Peoples Party candidate for NA-207 Asif Ali Zardari urged PTI members to work hard, highlighting that

success requires effort.

Speaking at the office of Returning Officer after filing his nomination papers in Nawab Shah, Zardari expressed confidence in the Peoples Party's future. He said that PPP would form the next government after winning the Feb 8 polls. He said that the chief justice assured the nation of timely elections during the hearing in the Supreme Court.

Zardari, who arrived at Nawabshah Airport via a special plane, formally submitted his nomination papers for the NA-207 constituency.

SAPM for Human Rights stresses to follow Quaid's principles

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister for Human Rights and Women's Development Mushaal Hussein Mullick in her special message on the birthday of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, congratulated the nation and stressed to follow Qaid's footsteps in every sphere of life. Congratulating the nation on the occasion of the birthday of the father of the nation



Quaid-e-Azam, Mushaal said that Qaid secured the future of the Muslims of the subcontinent with his tireless work.

She said that the life of the Quaid-e-Azam teaches

us unshakable determination and indomitable spirit and this day serves as a reminder of our responsibility in shaping the future of Pakistan. She further said in her message that by following the guiding principles of the Quaid-e-Azam, the nation can make Pakistan one of the developed countries, a torch-bearer in the world and it is our collective responsibility to keep alive the Quaid's vision for Pakistan.

گیس کے استعمال میں لازم ہے احتیاط

گیس لیکج کی صورت میں اپنی حفاظت یقینی بنائیں اور یہ احتیاطی تدابیر اپنائیں

کوئٹہ اور دروازے کھولیں

ماچس یا لائٹ بھرت جائیں

مینی والو بند کریں

گیس لیکج کی اطلاع دینے سے باز نہ رہیں

آپ کی حفاظت کی ضمانت ہمیں اپنی حفاظت کی عادت یقینی بنانا ہے

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