



17th death anniversary of Saddam Hussein

The daughter of the late Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has posted on her Twitter account what she said were the last words her father had for the Iraqi people, four days before his execution on December 30, 2006. "Oh honourable people, I entrust you and my soul to the merciful Lord, who does not disappoint the honest believer ... God is great"



Food prices and energy tariffs are worsening cost-of-living crisis

Chicken and eggs as well as vegetables were among the items that pushed the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI) up yet again on year-on-year basis to 43.25 per cent as food inflation combined with rising energy tariffs continue worsening the cost-of-living crisis in Pakistan. Stagnant wages in the absence of any direct government cash support means purchasing power is shrinking at a rate that is unprecedented in the country's history. (Details on Page 8)

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

Consultative session

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister for Human Rights and Women Empowerment, Mushaal Hussein Mullick, chairing first consultative session of Kashmir Advisory Committee on Saturday.



Photo: PID

Terrorist commander Khurray among five killed in N Waziristan operation: ISPR



City Desk

RAWALPINDI: Terrorist Commander Rahzaib alias Khurray, among five terrorists, was killed during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) conducted by the security forces in the general area of Mir Ali in the North Waziristan district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release on Saturday, the forces conducted the IBO on December 29 on the reported presence of terrorists. During the conduct of the operation, after intense fire

exchange, the five terrorists were eliminated who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities against security forces as well as extortion and target killings of innocent civilians. The forces also recovered weapons and ammunition during the operation. The locals of the area appreciated the operation. However, a sanitization operation was being carried out to eliminate any other terrorists found in the area, as the security forces were determined to wipe out the menace of terrorism from the country.

Over 18,000 IBOs conducted across country

566 eliminated & 5,161 terrorists arrested in 2023

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: As many as 18,736 intelligence-based operations (IBOs) have been conducted by the security forces across the country in 2023 resulted in the elimination of 566 and the arrest of 5,161 terrorists during various actions taken to maintain peace and security in the country. According to the data available from this news agency, effective security measures have been taken by the forces against terrorists in the year 2023.

In the year 2023, in view of the situation of unrest in the region, effective anti-terrorism measures were taken for national defense



and security. The data indicated that the traces and evidence of recent terrorist incidents in the country was linked to terrorist sanctuaries in Afghanistan. In the year 2023, the security forces

took timely action and exterminated many wanted terrorists. Due to the effective operations of intelligence agencies, Gulzar Imam Shambe and Sarfaraz Bengalzai, the most impor-

tant commanders of the Baloch National Army left terrorism and rejoined the national mainstream. However, 15,063 intelligence-based operations were conducted in Balochistan and 109 terrorists were sent to hell. Some 1,942 intelligence-based operations were conducted in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa while 447 terrorists were sent to hell.

As many as 190 intelligence-based operations were conducted in Punjab, 14 in Gilgit-Baltistan and 1,987 in Sindh while 10 terrorists were sent to hell in h. Pakistan Armed Forces, other law enforcement agencies and people have made selfless sacrifices in the war

against terrorism. More than 1,000 people, including more than 260 officers and soldiers of the Pakistan Army, sacrificed their lives for the sake of the country in the terrorist attacks. Pakistan forces have taken numerous steps to make the country a cradle of peace, from which there is a bright hope that the coming time will be one of peace and stability. Pakistan forces will continue the war against terrorism with the full support of the people until the end of the last terrorist. In the coming year, the security forces, together with the law enforcement agencies, will continue the war against terrorism with a new dimension and determination.

ECP challenges PHC verdict on PTI election symbol

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Saturday challenged the Peshawar High Court's (PHC) decision to reinstate the PTI's election symbol.

On December 26, the high court announced the verdict on PTI's petition challenging the ECP's verdict, which had stripped PTI of using the 'bat' symbol.

The election watchdog has filed an intra-court appeal in the PHC challenging the decision of its single-judge bench.

In its petition, the election body has requested the court to review the PTI's intra-party elections and its decision related to the election symbol.

Suspending permission for SKMCH fundraiser would result in deaths of thousands: Dr Alvi

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi said on Friday suspending permission to raise funds, leading to any delay in the construction of the Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital (SKMCH) in Karachi, would potentially result in the deaths of thousands who still go untreated.

The statement came a day after reports emerged that the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration withdrew the No-Objection Certificate (NOC) issued to the SKMCH for holding a fundraiser at a local hotel in Islamabad.

"Shaukat Khanum Cancer



Hospital is a world-recognized, state-of-the-art facility that has been providing cutting-edge top-of-the-line treatments for poor cancer patients since its inception. Having been personally involved in preventing & treating oral cancer all my life and Mrs Samina Alvi in spreading awareness for early diagnosis of breast cancer to save lives,

we all are very aware of the costly cancer burden of Pakistan," the president wrote on his official Twitter handle.

He said that suspending permission to raise funds leading to any delay in the construction of the SKMCH hospital in Karachi would lead to the potential deaths of thousands who still go untreated.

"This is like cutting off [] one's nose to spite the face. Pakistan is seriously lacking in curative health care. All private philanthropy especially this outstanding one of SKMCH must be encouraged," he added. Dr Alvi also called for reversing the cancellation of the fund-raising NOC.

Sheikh Rashid to move court against rejection of nomination papers

Naveed Ahmad Khan

RAWALPINDI: Awami Muslim League chief

Sheikh Rashid Ahmed on Saturday announced he will move the Supreme Court against the rejection of his nomination papers.

In a video message released here, the former interior minister stated that the returning officer called him to the commissioner's office on half an hour's notice, scrutinised his nomination papers and made allegations that he did not pay for staying at the Murree rest-house.

According to Rashid, he has never stayed at the rest-house. But he said that he was even ready to pay for it.

Nawaz, Zardari and Maryam's nomination papers approved

Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Saturday approved the nomination papers of Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) supreme Nawaz Sharif, Senior Vice President Maryam Nawaz and PPP co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari.

The nomination papers of prominent leaders have been approved whereas many others

rejected in the ongoing scrutiny of the nomination papers filed by the candidates to contest the general elections 2024.

Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's nomination papers have been accepted as no objection was filed in NA 130 (Lahore). The nomination papers of PML-N chief organizer Maryam Nawaz were approved from provincial constituency whereas objections were filed on the National Assem-



bly seat.

The ECP also approved the nomination papers of former president and PPP co-chairman

Asif Ali Zardari from NA 207 (Nawabshah).

On the other side, the nomination papers of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders Yasmin Rashid NA 130 (Lahore), Hammad Azhar PP 172, Asad Qaiser NA 19, PK 50, Shehram Tarakai NA 20, PK 52,53, Ali Muhammad Khan NA 23 and Qasim Khan Suri NA 263 were rejected.

It is pertinent to mention here that the scrutiny of the nomination

papers filed by the candidates to contest general elections 2024 will continue until December 30 (Saturday).

Appeals against the acceptance or rejection of nomination papers can be submitted until January 3 and decisions on these appeals will be made by January 10.

The list of candidates will be displayed on the 11th of January, and candidates will have the option to withdraw by January 12.

Caretaker govt nothing to do with rejection or acceptance of nomination papers: Solangi

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Saturday categorically rejected the notion that the caretaker government had any involvement in either acceptance or rejection of the nomination papers of the aspiring candidates for the general election.

The caretaker government had nothing to do with the acceptance or rejection of nomination papers which

was part of the constitutional process, the minister said while speaking in a Television (TV) talk show of the private media.

"Only the Election Commission has authority to decide on election-related matters," the minister stressed.

He said the caretaker government was committed to assist the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in providing financial and administrative support to the electoral watchdog for the elections.

Sardar Attique congratulated to new joiners in Dhirkot



Abdul Majeed Tahir

GHAZIABAD: All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference President and former Prime Minister Sardar Atique Ahmad Khan's paid a visit to Dhirkot. Hundreds of people resigned from Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and Jamaat-e-Islami and joined the Muslim Conference at Mujahid e Awwal House Atique Ghaziabad. President Muslim Conference Sardar Atique Ahmad Khan garlanded and congratulated those who left Jamaat-e-Islami and Tehreek-e-Insaf and joined the Muslim Conference from Union Council Charrala Ward Gahel Pona at Mujahid e Awwal House Ghaziabad. Sardar Lal Abbasi presided over and chief guest was Sardar Wajid Abbasi, president of Karachi Muslim Conference. President Muslim Conference, Sardar Atique Ahmad Khan, while

addressing the joining program, said that the new joiners are welcome in the party and the new joiners will be given a rightful place in the party. He said that the strengthening of the Muslim Conference is the strengthening of the Azadi Movement, and they will not let the lighted candle of Mujahid Mujahid e Awwal Sardar Muhammad Abdul Qayyum Khan be extinguished. He said that the journey of strengthening the Muslim Conference has started again. This is the time for the strength of the Muslim Conference. He said that the Muslim Conference is the party of the present, past and future. The roots of which are in the people. The Muslim Conference faced difficulties before, but the workers faced every difficulty bravely. The Muslim Conference can never ignore the ideological and active workers of the party. The Muslim Conference is becoming a strong party by reor-

ganizing itself from the grass root level. He said that the eyes of the people of Occupied Kashmir are currently fixed on the Muslim Conference. From the platform of the Muslim Conference, the Kashmiris made their commitment to Pakistan by accepting the resolution of the accession of Pakistan. The role played by the Muslim Conference for the freedom movement and the completion of Pakistan is not hidden from anyone. He said that the Muslim Conference is an ideological force of the state which has been standing on its ideas for a century. The Muslim Conference workers should play an active role in conveying the message of the party to the new generation. He said that the people of Occupied Kashmir are still making sacrifices following the footsteps of the martyrs of Kashmir, India is suppressing the voice of truth and truth

of Kashmiris like the Dogra rulers. The flashpoint has become, if the world does not realize the seriousness of this problem, the dream of peace, stability and development in South Asia will not be fulfilled. Sardar Sajjad Abbasi, Sardar Khan Afsar Khan, Sardar Umair Abdul Rauf, Abdul Basit Abbasi, Syed Abbasi, Syed Yasin Shah, Makram Naseem Abbasi, Ishtiaq Abbasi, Saeed Abbasi, Irshad Ashraf, Muhammad Hayat Abbasi, Muhammad Ali Abbasi, Sardar Shah Zaman Abbasi, Kamran Zaman, Syed Abbasi, Iqbal Abbasi, Zaheer Abbasi, Yasir Iqbal Abbasi, Tabish Abbasi, Mehtab Yasin, Shafaat Hussain, Muhammad Nawaz Khan, Taj Abbasi, Abdul Rashid Abbasi, Farooq Hussain, Sardar Munsif Khan, Adnan Nazir, Mushtaq Abbasi, Sardar Ahmad Khan, Javed Abbasi, Gultaj Kabir, Jawad Zahoor and many others were joined the Muslim Conference

PTI tickets should be distributed fairly, says PTI leader Ghulam Bilal

PNP

PESHAWAR: The residents and business community of Peshawar Cantt demand that the ticket for PK-81 should not be given to parachute candidates or those involved in photo sessions. Instead, it should be given to the former Deputy Organizer PTI Peshawar, Syed Qasim Ali Shah, who stands with the party during challenging times. Syed Qasim Ali Shah's connection to a political family in Peshawar, particularly his father's notable services as Mayor and Provincial Minister, is acknowledged and praised. Ghulam Bilal Javaid, leader of the business community in Peshawar Cantt, and others have unanimously decided to provide complete support if Syed Qasim Ali Shah is nominated. Javaid emphasized that not only the business community but also residents of Cantt have expressed their demand for Qasim Ali Shah to be given the ticket for PK-81. In a recent gathering of party members at Former member Cantonment board Peshawar Ghulam Hussain chand's Residence a team was formed to fully support Qasim Ali Shah and ensure success in the upcoming elections. The collective decision was made that PK-81 ticket should be given to Syed Qasim Ali Shah, reflecting the joint demand of Peshawar Cantt's residents and business community.



22 terrorists arrested from terrorists organization: Spokesman CTD Punjab

Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) in the Punjab province has foiled a major terror plot by arresting 22 suspected terrorists linked with a different banned out-fits during operations in different areas of Punjab. According to the spokesman, the CTD Punjab conducted 244 intelligence based operations in different districts of the province to effectively deal with any untoward incident of terrorism, in which 245 suspected persons were interrogated and 22 alleged terrorists were arrested with weapons, explosives and other prohibited materials. Among the arrested terrorists are Osama, Matiullah, Muhammad Arshad, Muhammad Ramzan, Muhammad Hasnain, Khanzada, Abdul Rasheed, Aamir Shehzad, Faizan Haider, Shizan Haider, Hikmatullah, Muhammad Tauqeer, Hamid Bashir, Ghofran Ahmed, Muhammad Parvez, Muhammad Sufyan, Muhammad Binyamin, Muhammad Abdullah, Hashim Khan, Hafiz Muhammad Umar Shehzad, Abdul Rehman and Imam Shah, he said and added that they belong to the banned organizations Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, Baloch Liberation Army, Sepah Sahaba Pakistan, ISIS, Lashkar Jhangvi and Sepah Muhammad Pakistan. He said that the arrest of these terrorists was carried out during intelligence-based operations in Lahore, Bahawalpur, Rawalpindi, Sheikhpura, Faisalabad, Sheikhpura, Gujranwala, Bahawalnagar and Sargodha. He said that Explosives 10570 grams, hand grenade 01, IED bomb 02, detonators 28, protective fuse wire 52 feet, Prima Card 05 feet, pistol 30 bore 01, rifle 01, bullets 07, banned books 07, pamphlets 75, stickers of banned organization 65, one flag of banned organization, receipt boxes 03, mobile phone 01 and cash of Rs.71790 have been recovered from the possession of terrorists.

Nishtar Medical University will establish 5 clinical collection centers in Multan City



Kiran Asim

MULTAN: Caretaker Provincial Health Minister Punjab Dr. Javed Akram has said that Nishtar Medical University will establish 5 collection centers in Multan city to provide quality and cheap laboratory tests to patients where patients above 60 years of age are diagnosed with various diseases. Special discount of 20% on diagnostic test fees will be given. He said this yesterday while presiding over the Syndicate meeting of Nishtar Medical University. He said that provision of high, quality and affordable health facilities to the people is the first priority of the government. The provincial minister said that any kind of compromise in the treatment and care of patients in government hospitals is not acceptable. He said that a different color bed sheet has been allocated every day to ensure daily change of sheets on the beds of hospitalized patients. The provincial minister presided over the 14th syndicate meeting of Nishtar Medical University Multan and approved the changes in the fees of the university. Provincial Minister Dr. Javed Akram said that the upcoming meeting of the Syndicate will be held according to modern requirements. It will be done in Syndicate style using paperless technology. In the Syndicate meeting, 16 agenda items including the appointment of Deans in various departments were approved. Vice Chancellor Dr. Prof. Rana Altaf Ahmed, well-known industrialist and former provincial minister Jalaluddin Rumi, Vice Chancellor of Agriculture University Multan Rao Asif Ali and other syndicate members participated in the meeting. Earlier, the provincial minister inaugurated the Pharmacy College, Staff Club and Syndicate Hall of Nishtar Medical University. On this occasion, he said that with the establishment of pharmacy college, the research work on medicines can be done in an efficient manner.

Waiting

MULTAN: To escape the severe cold, wild pigeons are waiting for the sun to rise on the high voltage wires outside the shrine of Hazrat Shah Rukn Alam.



Photo: Asim Tanveer

People's Party is the Voice of the Farmers, Laborers and Working Class: Gillani

Kiran Asim

MULTAN: Former Prime Minister Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani said that The People's Party is the voice of the farmers, laborers and working class so that the common poor citizen can be prosperous.

That is the reason why the People's Party is once again in the field of general elections and the leadership of the People's Party has started the election campaign from Garhi Khuda Bakhsh, Larkana, Sindh and KPK. After Balochistan, soon the party leadership will hold a rally in Punjab and announce the manifesto. Sahabzada Pir Hafiz Ghulam Qutbuddin Chishti prayed for my son Ali Musa Gillani before and he



succeeded with a huge mandate. Also, I and my son Ali Musa Gillani along with Wasif Mazhar Raan are also in the election field, pray for the success of all of us. These views were expressed by Pir Hafiz Ghulam Qutbuddin Chishti, Sajjada Nashin of Darbar Aliya Pani-

pat and Naib Amer-e Jamaat Ahlus Sunnat Pakistan. In the meeting with Pir Jalaluddin Chishti Sabri and on this occasion he also attended the Darbar Aliya shrine of Hazrat Baba Faridganj Shakar in Pakpattan and laid a wreath and on this occasion peace and prosper-

ity of the country and nation. A special prayer was also offered for the establishment of law and order, while on this occasion former provincial minister Syed Ali Haider Gillani, Malik Wasif Mazhar Raan and Malik Nasir Raan were also present

CPDI Releases its Fourth Annual Report on the State of Budget Transparency in Pakistan

Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: CPDI has released its fourth annual report on the "State of Budget Transparency in Pakistan, International Best Practices". The report pointed out shortcomings in the budgeting process at the federal and provincial levels and calls for budget proposals to be widely discussed with civic groups, government agencies and key stakeholders. This report does not only aim to present findings but to facilitate dialogue - between governments, civil society, and the citizens at large. The report says Pakistan should consider launching a centralized digital plat-

form dedicated to fostering citizen participation. This platform should be designed to present intricate budgetary details in a manner easily digestible to the citizen. Governments must prioritize the initiation of nationwide public consultations, including town-hall meetings and workshops, during the crucial budget formulation phase. Report also demanded to develop and issue separate budget statements for Women, Minorities, Children, and PWDs, outlining specific allocations and strategies tailored to each group's unique needs and challenges. The reports urges to avoid the inconsistency observed in Pakistan, the practice of presenting a citizens' budget should

be formalized through specific legislation or regulations. According to the CPDI report, Governments should make budget data available in widely accepted machine-readable formats like Excel and CSV. In addition, the participation of citizens in the budgeting process should be given legal protection and government agencies should be required to consult with the citizens during the various stages of budget making process. In particular, the role of MPs should be enhanced during budget formulation and its implementation. While talking with elected representatives, LG representatives, CSOs

and media persons, during "stakeholder's dialogue on transparent budgeting" organized by member organization DARE Foundation of CNBA (Citizens Network for Budget Accountability Ms. Khalida Nadeem - Executive Director, DARE Foundation said that for the past decade, CPDI has been working to improve the budgeting process in Pakistan from the district to the federal level to promote transparency in it. As a result, fourth report based on "State of Budget Transparency in Pakistan 2023" has been released. This report not only examines budget transparency in Pakistan but also helps to gauge the effectiveness of access to information laws in Pakistan in obtaining budget information.



Islamabad
15° - 23° Clear

SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr	5:43 am
Zohr	12:10 pm
Asr	3:31 pm
Maghrib	5:08 pm
Isha	6:37 pm

EMERGENCY

Rescue (Police)	15
Bomb Disposal	15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad	1122 & 1122 & 1122
Emergency Ambulance	1122 & 4451122
Motorway Police	9266044
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
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

Kashmir Advisory Committee Inaugural Consultative Session

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Kashmir Advisory Committee formed under the leadership of Special Assistant to Prime Minister, Mushaal Hussein Mullick, held its first consultative meeting. The establishment of the Kashmir Advisory Committee is a key component of the 100-day plan initiated by the SAPM. The consultative session was attended by dignitaries from diverse fields including Ms. Sabien Hussein Mullick (Focal Person of the SAPM), Syed Yousuf Naseem (APHC), Mr. Farooq Rehmani (APHC), Mehmood Ahmed Sagar (APHC), Sheikh Mateen (APHC), Ghulam Muhammad Safi (APHC), Rafiq Dar JKLF, Syed Faiz Naqashbandi (APHC), Yousaf Naseem (APHC) Mr. Abid Abbasi (President RIUJ), Prof Shahid Afridi NDU, Dr. Raheem Awan (DG LAJA), Prof. Zafar Iqbal Advisor SAPM, Dr. Waleed Rasool, Dr. Mukhtar Ahmad (Chairman HEC), Manzoor Masih (Human Rights Commission), Fajar Rabia Pasha Advisor SAPM, Javed Jadoon (Director



for Kashmir), Dr. Syed Mujahid Gilani (President of Kashmir Youth Alliance), Mr. Ishtiaq Ahmad Bhatti (Chairman Al-Ansar Welfare), Yasir Rehman (Senior Anchorperson PTV News), Syed Waqas Banoori Advisor SAPM and Barrister Sundas Malik.

The committee engaged in comprehensive discussion concerning both immediate and long term strategies for addressing the unlawful actions undertaken by India in the region of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). Members of the committee provided valuable insights and recommendations pertaining to the situation in IIOJK, particularly in light of the recent Indian Supreme Court decision affirming the annulment of Kashmir's special status by the Indian Government.

During the consultative session, Mushaal Hussein Mullick highlighted the influence of BJP and RSS ideologies on the Indian Judiciary. She raised questions regarding the timing of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Amendment) Act brought by Amit Shah and

Modi. She observed that the amendment act introduction mere weeks before the Indian Supreme Court's verdict implied a foreknowledge within the Modi-led government regarding the outcome of the impending ISC decision.

Mushaal emphasized that the concluding year presented the world with two formidable challenges: the situations in Palestine and IIOJK. She underscored the imperative for collaborative efforts among the people of both regions underlining the shared struggle for their self-determination. She noted that the people of Palestine and IIOJK are enduring the barbarism imposed by occupation forces in their quest for the fundamental right of self-determination. Urging the global community to pay attention to the escalating atrocities in these regions, she called for collective action to address the pressing human rights concerns in Palestine and IIOJK.

Mushaal underscored the unity across all segments of society in championing the just cause of Kashmir. She acknowledged the Kashmir diaspora as a valuable

asset in the ongoing struggle for the freedom of Kashmir. She highlighted the pivotal role of the Kashmiri diaspora in amplifying awareness globally about the human rights violations in IIOJK perpetrated by India.

Mushaal pointed out that the elimination of peaceful Kashmiri leaders by India on baseless pretexts could drive the youth of Kashmir toward adopting alternative means in their pursuit of freedom. She also voiced deep concerns over India's decision to ban peaceful Kashmiri political parties. She reiterated Pakistan's steadfast commitment to the Kashmiri people, affirming that Pakistan would continue providing moral, diplomatic, and political support to the oppressed population of the region. She also advocated for the strong measures to uplift the morale of the people of IIOJK.

Mushaal expressed gratitude to all the participants of the consultative session for their invaluable recommendations. She assured them that their insights would be disseminated to relevant stakeholders for consideration and further action.

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Protect

ISLAMABAD: A worker is busy in covering the plants on green belt along the Express Way to protect from frost, in Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Raja Farid

Sadiq Achakzai's overbearing entry into Politics of Waziristan



Adam Khan Wazir

TANK: Yesterday Chairman Mazloom Olasi Tehreek (MOT) Sadiq Achakzai's overbearing entry into the politics of Waziristan, and he shook the big political bridges.

Candidate of South Waziristan Upper/Lower Constituency NA.42 and chairman of Mazloom Olasi Tehreek (MOT) Haji Sadiq Achakzai visited Political Compound Tank for scrutinizing of nomination papers.

On this occasion, provincial assembly candidate PK.109 Malik Hayatullah Mehsud and provincial assembly candidate PK.110 Malik Anwar Suleman Khel along with the workers warmly welcomed tank and Dera Ismail Khan.

Thousands of people welcomed the Sheikh Market Tank Bhai Pass which was brought to the Deputy Commissioner Compound Tank in the form of a rally.

Sadiq Achakzai, chairman of Mazloom Olasi Tehreek (MOT), said on this occasion that we have to help oppressed people by becoming Pakistanis instead of nationalism while this is the goal of the oppressed people's movement of Pakistan.

Chairman Sadiq Khan Achakzai said that the people's representatives in power here for many decades have left no stone unturned in destroying the area.

CBD Punjab accelerates Walton Road Upgradation

City Desk

LAHORE: After the successful completion of the Captain Karnal Sher Khan Shaheed Flyover, Punjab Central Business District Development Authority (PCBD DA), also known as Central Business District Punjab (CBD Punjab), is steadfastly advancing the Walton Road Upgradation. Imran Amin, CEO of CBD Punjab, recently visited the Walton Road Upgradation Project and presided over a comprehensive review meeting.

COO CBD Punjab Brigadier (R) Mansoor Janjua, Executive Director Technical Riaz Hussain, Director Project Management Asif Iqbal, Director Construction Asif Babar, Director Architecture Sameer Aftab, Project Director NLC Brigadier (R) Umar Farooqui, and other senior officials of CBD Punjab, NLC, and NESPAK were present during the meeting.

CEO CBD Punjab, Imran Amin, personally assessed the progress of the conduit work on Walton Road. He emphasized that, following the directives of Punjab Chief Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi, the conduit work will be completed promptly. Imran Amin has directed to utilize full workforce and machinery in the ongoing Walton Road Upgradation project.

Additionally, CEO CBD Punjab, reviewed landscaping work on Captain Karnal Sher Khan Shaheed, flyover, underlining the commitment to both functionality and aesthetics in infrastructure development.

Islamabad police mobilize extensive measures for New Year's Eve traffic management

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police (Traffic Wing) have made an elaborate plan to ensure smooth traffic flow during celebrations of New Year night and to ensure public safety as well as curb traffic violations.

Under the guidance of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP), Dr Akbar Nasir Khan, Islamabad Capital Police is set to enforce strict measures against various traffic offences. These include wheeling, participation in car racing, and any activities that disrupt the flow of traffic. Special attention will be given to motorcyclists with heavy silencers, known for creating noise disturbances on the roads.

On the night of New Year's Eve, a significant deployment of law enforcement personnel is planned. This includes SP Traffic, 4 DSPs, 22 inspectors, and 475 officers, including the specialized squads. These units will be stationed strategically across key roads, intersections, and areas prone to traffic violations.

Chief Traffic Officer Islamabad, Muhammad Sarfraz Virk, has issued an appeal to the citizens. He urged parents not to allow their children to engage in wheeling activities, particularly on motorbikes, emphasizing the importance of ensuring the safety of lives and property during the celebratory night.

Capital Police is gearing up for a proactive approach to traffic management, ensuring a safe and secure environment for residents and visitors during the upcoming New Year's Eve celebrations.

Ahmad Butt met with JS Ministry Foreign Affairs



Anwar Chohan

ISLAMABAD: The Central President of Pakistan South Africa Association Ahmad Raza Butt met with Joint Secretary for Foreign Affairs Mr. Sulaiman Sharif.

Ahmed Raza Butt has requested the South African government to seriously deal with the problems of the Pakistani community, especially the ongoing killing of Pakistanis in South Africa, so that the Pakistani community living in South Africa To ensure the safety of life and property

In the meeting, the efforts of the Pakistani community in South Africa were mentioned and how they are playing their key role in the economy of Pakistan. Go and understand the importance of the Pakistani community and play a practical role in solving their problems.

Zong 4G and Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal join hands to revolutionize Digital Education in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Zong 4G, Pakistan's leading telecom operator has initiated the setup of a state-of-the-art Digital Laboratory at the Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal's Women Empowerment Centre in Islamabad.

Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal is a social welfare organization formulated by the Government of Pakistan in 1992 to provide financial assistance to the underprivileged.

This partnership is aimed at fostering Zong 4G's Sustainability Program which was introduced as an act of promoting welfare within the society. Zong 4G's proactiveness is an effort to transform digital education in Pakistan and



make it accessible for all. With Digital Inclusion as its prime objective, this collaboration will help around 100 women access unimpeded opportunities for digital education.

While promoting the sponsorship, the official spokesperson for Zong 4G stated, 'We are pleased to initiate another successful partnership that will help promote digital education for women in Pakistan. Zong 4G considers providing access to digital education as its responsibility and wants to help revolutionize digital inclusion in Pakistan.'

Zong 4G has been working effortlessly to create avenues for promoting the digital revolution in Pakistan and has been an integral part of such initiatives. Zong 4G aims to expand the number of digital laboratories within Pakistan so that every student in Pakistan has access to top-notch, uninterrupted digital education.

Professor Shawl's death in Islamabad mourned by prominent Kashmiri leaders

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Today marked a somber gathering at Wani House in Islamabad, where eminent figures came together to express their profound condolences to the family of the late Professor Nazir Ahmed Shawl. The attendees included Muhammad Hanif Abbasi, ex-federal minister, Sardar Naseem Khan, former Mayor of Rawalpindi, and Altaf Ahmed Bhat, senior Hurriyat leader, who collectively mourned the loss of a true visionary and advocate for justice for Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

Professor Shawl's passing, occurring on Friday in London after a brief illness, resonated deeply within the Kashmiri community and far beyond. Muhammad Hanif Abbasi, a seasoned politician, conveyed his condolences, recognizing Professor Shawl's significant role in the Kashmir cause. Abbasi reflected on the void left by Professor Shawl's departure and remarked, "His unwavering commitment to justice



and self-determination echoes in the corridors of our political history. His departure leaves a void that will be felt deeply."

Sardar Naseem Khan, former Mayor of Rawalpindi, paid tribute to Professor Shawl's multifaceted contributions. "Professor Shawl was a gem of knowledge and a stalwart in the

pursuit of Kashmir's liberation.

Altaf Ahmed Bhat, senior Hurriyat leader, while offering his condolences and reflecting on Professor Shawl's global impact said that, "In the memory of Professor Shawl, we remember a fearless advocate for human rights and a beacon for the Kashmir cause.

During their visit, these leaders met with the nephews of late professor Shawl: Mohy uddin Wani, Shahab Uddin Wani, Moin Uddin Wani, and other relatives, offering their condolences and sharing memories of the iconic figure. Their visit, laden with condolences, highlighted the unity in grief over the loss of a figurehead in the struggle for self-determination.

Born on October 13, 1946, in Baramulla, Professor Shawl's life journey was celebrated as a polymath—a multilingual individual, an educator, a poet, and a staunch advocate for human rights.

His educational background included undergraduate studies in sciences at Kashmir University, Srinagar, and post-graduation in Botany from the same esteemed institution. Throughout his illustrious career, Professor Shawl served as a distinguished professor and researcher in Botany, contributing significantly to the academic and scientific communities.

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Army Chief Vs Mafias - IV

In short, they were successful in establishing the law of the jungle in Pakistan's strategic location between Afghanistan, a major opium producer, and global drug markets have made it a hub for drug trafficking. Various drug cartels and networks operate within the country, facilitating the transport of narcotics across borders. The involvement of these mafias in drug trafficking has severe social and economic consequences, contributing to addiction, crime, and instability.

In major urban centers like Karachi, water scarcity is a pressing issue. The water tanker mafia has emerged as a powerful player in controlling and distributing water resources. Operating as an unregulated industry, this mafia manipulates water distribution, creating artificial shortages and charging exorbitant prices for this essential resource. The water tanker mafia's actions exacerbate challenges posed by inadequate infrastructure and mismanagement of water resources.

Pakistan's lush forests are home to diverse ecosystems, but illegal logging and deforestation are rampant due to the timber mafia. Exploiting weak regulations and corrupt officials, this criminal syndicate engages in the illegal felling of trees, leading to environmental degradation, habitat loss, and a negative impact on climate change. The timber mafia's influence extends to rural areas, where communities are often economically dependent on forestry-related activities.

Extortion is a common practice by various mafias in Pakistan, targeting businesses, traders, and even ordinary citizens. Extortionists often demand protection money, threatening violence or harm if payments are not made. This pervasive

criminal activity not only affects individual livelihoods but also contributes to an atmosphere of fear and insecurity. Additionally, there are dollar and sugar mafias involved in illegal storage and smuggling of dollars and sugar. Feudal and upper-class mafias treat lower and middle classes as subordinates, controlling resources such as jobs, tenders, and basic facilities. The influence of these powerful mafias can be observed in various aspects of society.

A report on smuggling submitted to the Prime Minister House few months ago revealed that proceeds from oil smuggling are being utilized by terrorists. The report disclosed that over 2 billion 81 million liters of oil are smuggled from Iran to Pakistan annually, resulting in an annual loss exceeding 60 billion rupees for Pakistan. It identified 995 pumps across the country selling Iranian oil, with the involvement of 90 government officials and 29 politicians in the smuggling operation. Furthermore, the report highlighted the complicity of Pakistan State Oil (PSO) vehicles in transporting Iranian oil into the country. The report also exposed the involvement of 722 currency dealers in hawala hundi business, distributed across various regions of Pakistan.

These were the bitter realities. Now come to the recent positive developments.

Recently, the daughter of a martyred soldier lodged a complaint with Army Chief General Asim Munir, prompting the Army Chief to assure a resolution to the issue and offer full cooperation. The video of Martyrs' Day, where the daughter

shared her concerns, has gained widespread attention on social media. She informed the Army Chief that a feudal in Dera Murad Jamali consistently diverts floodwater toward her house. In response, the Army Chief reassured her, pledging not to release water toward her property in the future. During the incident, the Army Chief directed staff to convey a message to the feudal, cautioning against such actions in the future, or else 'your water will reach somewhere else.'

These formidable mafias in Pakistan not only have social implications for the country but also tarnish its global image and inflict economic losses. It is noteworthy that, for the first time in Pakistan's history, we have an Army Chief who

has taken a stand against these powerful mafias. Stringent actions have been taken against smuggling, sugar, and dollar mafias. General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS), presided over the 260th Corps Commanders' Conference (CCC) at GHQ in October of this year. Among other matters, the forum conducted a comprehensive review of ongoing initiatives against illegal economic activities. COAS emphasized that "Pakistan Army will continue to provide all-out support to the government and LEAs in taking strict lawful actions against illegal economic activities across the country. Actions against hoarding and smuggling mafias and cartels in different domains will be further strengthened in coming days to rid the country from the negative impact of such ill practices."

During an interaction with Pakistani businessmen few weeks ago, discussions centered on the critical issues of sugar and dollar smuggling, with their cessation deemed essential for economic revival. Responding to inquiries, the Chief expressed readiness to combat smuggling by fortifying porous borders. As a result of the government and army's stringent measures, there has been a decline in dollar rates. Zafar Pracha, Secretary General of the Exchange Companies Association, acknowledged the positive impact of the Army Chief's actions a few weeks ago, considering it the best day for the Pakistani economy. Malik Bostan, Chairman of the Foreign Exchange Association, also highlighted a shift, noting that previously people would come to buy dollars, but now, despite the availability of dollars, there is a lack of buyers.

Readers, the nation has welcomed the intervention of the Army Chief, and it is heartening for the people of Pakistan to see the mafias being checked through timely intervention. Mafias sought to create chaos in the currency market through black marketing, but the situation has improved. The State Bank and Finance are expected to use this opportunity to enhance systems. Smuggling has decreased, and the prices of the dollar, fuel, sugar, and essential goods have stabilized. The Pakistani government, Army Chief, and Pak Army have acknowledged the serious threat posed by these mafias and have taken steps to curb their influence. Positive results of these interventions are evident practically and on the ground, with the expectation that the situation will further improve in the coming days.

Concluded

UN Security Council calls for Afghan special envoy appointment

The United Nations Security Council adopted a resolution on Friday calling for the appointment of a special envoy for Afghanistan to increase engagement with the country and its Taliban leaders.

It followed an independent assessment report issued in November which called for greater engagement with Afghanistan following the return to power of the Taliban in August 2021.

The resolution calls on the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to name a special envoy to promote the independent report's recommendations, particularly regarding gender and human rights.

The resolution was adopted after 13 members of the Security Council voted in favor, while Russia and China abstained.

"The UAE and Japan firmly believe the independent assessment serves as the best basis for discussions going forward," said Japan's UN ambassador Yamazaki Kazuyuki ahead of the vote.

"The resolution highlights the need to increase international engagement in a more coherent, coordinated and structured manner, as the independent assessment states."

The United Arab Emirates and Japan have responsibility for raising the situation in Afghanistan at the Security Council as so-called "pen-holders" for the issue.

The Taliban government is not officially recognized by any country or world body and the United Nations refers to the administration as the "Taliban de facto authorities".

Officials initially promised a softer version of the strict Islamic rule that characterized their first stint in power from 1996 to 2001, but restrictions have gradually been reintroduced – particularly affecting women.

Teenage girls have been banned from attending most secondary schools and women from universities, prompting global outrage and protests in some Afghan cities.

In November 2022 women were prohibited from entering parks, funfairs, gyms and public baths.

"The United States strongly supports this resolution's call for a UN Special Envoy for Afghanistan. A Special Envoy will be well positioned to coordinate international engagement on Afghanistan, including with relevant Afghan political actors and stakeholders," said the United States' representative following the adoption of the resolution.

PTI's Lawyers: A Seismic Shift... - I

Pakistan's political landscape stands at the brink of a transformative era, distinct from previous phases dominated by aristocrats, agriculturists, business magnates, and the military elite. In a calculated move, the establishment has consciously shut the doors on PTI's seasoned and controllable politicians. However, this strategic maneuver has inadvertently swung wide open the gates for a formidable new wave of rivals: the legal minds—the lawyers.

The jailed party leader, still wielding immense public support, makes a bold move by entrusting party tickets to a cadre of lawyers, capitalizing on their legal expertise, credibility, and widespread recognition. This decision reverberates positively across the country, where the populace views the influx of lawyers into politics as a beacon of hope and integrity in a politically turbulent landscape.

Yet, despite the public's favorable reception of the lawyers joining the PTI, the path to electoral victory remains fraught with challenges. The formidable opposition posed by the all-powerful military elite, with their entrenched control over various spheres of influence, casts a shadow over the PTI's prospects.

The outcome depends on PTI's resilience, the lawyers' ability to rally public support, and the level of interference from the powerful military elite. Despite the

odds against PTI, the entry of lawyers into politics signals transforming Pakistan's political landscape, posing an unexpected challenge to the established order. This unintended consequence reshapes power dynamics, presenting a significant challenge to the entrenched influence of established factions.

In this tumultuous scenario, the PTI finds itself in an unprecedented predicament, with the powerful military elite resorting to coercive tactics that have led to the incarceration and forced departure of key party leaders. Stripped of its core politicians, including a deeply popular Chairman with an astounding 90% approval rating, the PTI faces an uphill battle.

The military's influence looms large, potentially impeding the PTI's campaign through various means—manipulating the media narrative, intimidating voters, or even exerting control over electoral processes. Their capacity to undermine the PTI's efforts cannot be underestimated, given their extensive reach and resources.

Nonetheless, the lawyers' inclusion injects a new vigor into the PTI's campaign presenting a compelling narrative to the electorate, promising a departure from traditional politics tainted by coercion and manipulation. The lawyers' ability to articulate the PTI's message, coupled with their strong public appeal, serves as a potent force in mobilizing support and

countering the military's influence.

In this scenario, the jailed party leader's decision to nominate lawyers in place of the imprisoned and coerced party members can lead to a seismic shift in the political landscape. The country, eager for change and weary of autocratic control, might see these lawyers as symbols of hope and integrity in a corrupted political environment. Their professional backgrounds could serve as a powerful rallying point, attracting widespread support from various sectors disillusioned with traditional politics. The lawyers, well-versed in the law and skilled in articulating complex issues, could effectively communicate the party's message, outlining a vision for restoring democratic principles, rule of law, and civil liberties.

The decision by military elites to coerce the departure of conventional politicians from the party could yield unintended consequences, ultimately working against their bid to safeguard vested interests. By forcing out established politicians, the military might inadvertently strengthen the opposition outside the ruling party. This newly bolstered opposition, critical of military interference, could gain momentum and public sympathy. Additionally, the vacuum left by departing politicians could pave the way for the emergence of new leaders within the party. These emerging leaders might challenge the military's influence more vehemently, leveraging their legal knowledge to resist coercion and challenge attempts at undue control within the government.

To be continued

The Dark Years of Swat - II

Muhammad Zeshan Ali

Story of a poor family whose only breadwinners were three young men; brothers and barbers by profession. Their only crime was their profession which according to the Taliban was a crime big enough to slit their throats that too on Eid's day; a day of celebration and forgiveness. Despite continuous warnings from the Taliban, they did not part ways with the source of their livelihood, and ended up with the most severe consequences, unbearable and unforgivable for the family and the local people. With a heart full of contempt I would like to state about the cruel and evil man who played mind games with innocent people, but it is important to highlight his crimes and sins to the world. Moulana Fazlullah the resident of Imam Derai, and a very important member and commander of the Taliban.

He played a key role in promoting terrorism and abolishing the writ of Government in Swat. He was a cunning man; he targeted the State institutions through fiery sermons knowing that the people were already fed up with the state governance. He exercised politics for personal gains but did not allow the general public to participate in any sort of politics. Later on, he found an opportunity in the incident of Lal Masjid and ignited people to pick up arms against the state. With this announcement, the streets of Swat were flooded with foreign terrorists.

All these events gave rise to a wave of violence in Swat. Majority of the locals were nothing more than spectators and a minority; specifically those people who were criminals, drug addicts, and hooligans, joined hands with him. In 2004, the FM radio station of Fazlullah was launched and gradually it started propaganda against the state. As the people of Swat follow Islam as a religion, initially they like the teachings of Fazlullah as a Moulana; a religious teacher. With the passage of time, the literate people realized something was not going in the right direction especially when the Moulana started highlighting and targeting specific individuals, followed by actions that were not supported by the state. It alarmed many people and they started a campaign against the radio sermons of Moulana but by that time,

in the year 2008-9, it was too late. As per government data from Jan 2008 to Jan 2009, a total of 18 suicide attacks and 150 remote control explosion attacks were carried out. Not by the sons and relatives of Fazlullah but by those innocents who followed him blindly in the name of Islam. Those who understood his agenda; the local literate people, requested the administration to get hold of Fazlullah and put a stop to his channel and activities, as he was not that strong initially.

People realized the growing threat and tried to do everything they could before Fazlullah became a bigger threat but unfortunately, no serious action was taken. When the situation got worse and out of control the Pakistan Army was called to bring peace back to the valley. The First encounter against the Taliban started in 2007 (Operation Rah-e-Haq). The forces tried to take control back over the two districts i.e. Swat and Shangla but could not succeed. The Second operation and final confrontation was launched in 2009 (Operation Rah-e-Raast) which resulted in complete abolishment of Taliban in Swat. During these operations over 16000 extremists were killed and nearly 200 soldiers and officers were martyred. In addition to this, 1400 civilians lost their lives including political and influential figures.

Nearly 200 girls' schools were burnt by the Taliban, 100s of hotels were closed by them and nearly 27 Bridges were destroyed in the picturesque valley of Swat. In the period of military operations people had to leave Swat and become IDPs in millions. Approximately 1% might have preferred to stay back while 99% left their homes, properties and businesses. The brave people of Swat preferred to leave everything behind for the sake of peace and their homeland. According to the United Nations, this was the Fourth big displacement in the history of humankind. 2 billion rupees were sanctioned for the reconstruction of Swat and the rehabilitation of refugees. I, along with the peace-loving people of Swat hope this never happens again. I pray that no mother sees her children being slaughtered again, I wish no woman becomes a widow again and no children become fatherless again. May peace prevail and may ALLAH almighty protect our beautiful land from the evil eye.

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Kazakhstan's Foreign Policy Navigates Eurasia's Changing Geopolitics in 2023

Assem Assaniyaz

ASTANA: Geopolitical shifts in 2023 urged Kazakhstan to align its multivector foreign policy with Eurasia's evolving landscape while preserving its commitment to bilateral and multilateral obligations and ambitions towards new achievements on the world stage.

Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and Chinese President Xi Jinping commended the development of bilateral partnership during the Oct. 17 meeting in Beijing. Photo credit: Akorda.

Apart from enhancing cooperation within the Central Asian region, Kazakhstan's efforts to develop collaboration with Eurasian partners are yielding positive results. This year is no exception.

Kazakhstan-China visa-free travel

China, the world's second-largest economy, shares a border of 1,783 km with Kazakhstan. Bringing bilateral relations with China to a new qualitative level is a priority for its Central Asian neighbor. President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev has repeatedly underscored the effectiveness of interstate cooperation, including during his latest meeting with President of China Xi Jinping in October in Beijing.

Last month opened a new chapter in Kazakhstan-China cooperation. From Nov. 10, Kazakh and Chinese citizens are exempt from visa requirements for private affairs, tourism, medical treatment, international transport, transit and business purposes. The visa-free stay is capped at 30 calendar days from the moment of crossing the state border, with a cumulative total of 90

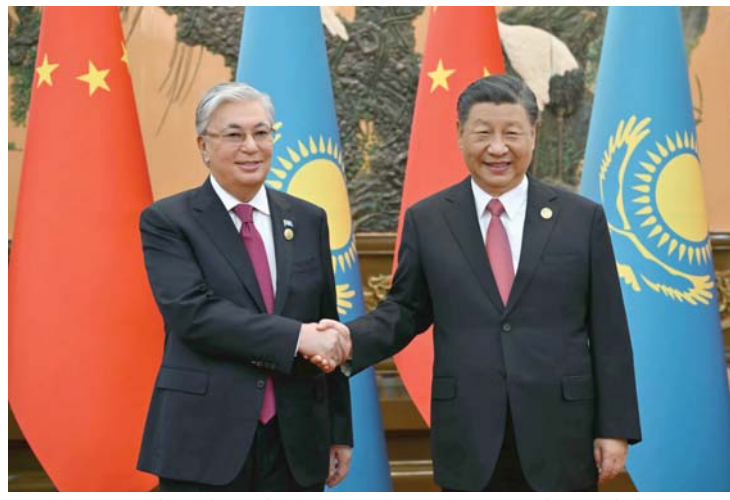
calendar days within 180 days.

Earlier, Chinese citizens were eligible to stay in Kazakhstan without a visa for 14 days from June 2022, while Kazakh citizens had to get a visa to enter China.

The tourist flow from China to Kazakhstan, according to the Kazakh Tourism national company, rebounded by 45% in the first half of 2023. The company, which oversees tourism development in the country, expects it will fully reach pre-pandemic levels by year-end.

To step up tourism exchange, next year was declared the year of Kazakhstan's tourism in China. It is expected that it will strengthen business ties, facilitate trade, and increase investments.

Kazakh officials continue to promote freedom of travel with other countries, which retained visa requirements in



response to a unilateral visa-free regime established by Kazakhstan, including for the European Union (EU) countries, Japan, India, and the United States.

In 2022, Kazakhstan accounted

for 45% of China's \$70.2 billion trade with the five Central Asian countries. According to the Ministry of National Economy, trade turnover between Kazakhstan and China between January and August this year hit \$19 billion, 22.6% higher compared to the same period in 2022. China accounts for 21% of Kazakhstan's foreign trade turnover.

Apart from that, Kazakhstan is ready to become a vital international transport and logistics hub, with 85% of all land transit traffic from China to Europe.

In the past 15 years, Kazakhstan has allocated more than \$35 billion to deliver large infrastructure projects such as the Kazakh-Chinese logistics center in Lianyungang, the Khorgos dry port, the Western Europe - Western China transit highway, and the railway corridor from China to Iran.

New expressway

Beijing: A new segment of the Beijing-Xiong'an expressway opened to traffic on Thursday, marking the completion of the entire expressway, according to China's transport authority.



Photo: Xinhua

KCEU chair condoles demise of prominent Kashmiri academic Prof. Nazir Shawl

Sohail Anjum Malik

BRUSSELS: Chairman of Kashmir Council Europe (KCEU) Ali Raza Syed expressed his deepest condolences on the death of prominent Kashmiri figure Professor Nazir Ahmed Shawl.

Professor Nazir Ahmed Shawl 77, who was a strong global voice for the Kashmir cause, passed away after a brief illness in London yesterday.

Expressing deepest condolences on demise of Prof. Shawl, Chair of KCEU said, his passing has come as a great loss for the people of occupied Kashmir, Azad Kashmir and Kashmiris based in other parts of the world.

In a condolence statement issued from Brussels, Ali Raza Syed said, as one of the true pioneers in the Kash-



mir's Movement, he was widely regarded as a gem of knowledge and a stalwart in the pursuit of the liberation of Jammu and Kashmir.

Chair of KCEU said, having many qualities, Prof. Shawl was a multitalented; an educationist, an author, a

human rights defender and a political thinker. People of Jammu and Kashmir will not forget his invaluable role as an advocate of their right to self-determination. He would be remembered forever for his matchless sacrifices for the Kashmiri cause.

Ali Raza Syed prayed to Allah Almighty to rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant patience to the bereaved family members to bear this loss.

The statement of Kashmir Council Europe said, the council would hold a condolence reference in order to express rich tribute to Professor Nazir Shawl. The event would be organized at Kashmir Council Europe Secretariat in Brussels, the capital of Belgium on Sunday, 31st December 2023.

Jamal Shah, emphasizes Bilateral cultural collaboration with Chinese Film/Tv delegation

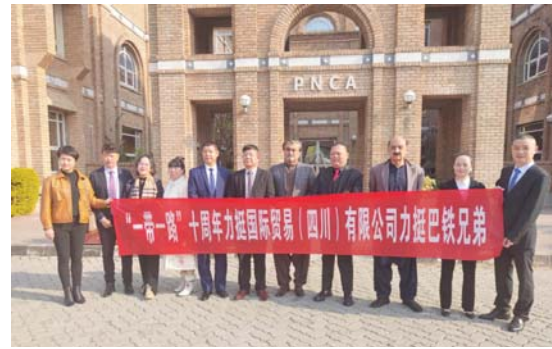
PPA

ISLAMABAD: In a landmark meeting held today on 30th December, the Caretaker Federal Minister for Culture and National Heritage, Jamal Shah, welcomed a distinguished delegation from China's TV & Film Industry.

Led by Mr. Zhang Yang, Director CFIC and Chairman of Chang Jiang, the delegation included key figures such as Mr. Hu Qiang, Chairman of Film Producer-Yihai Culture Communications, Co, Ltd, and Liang Ting, Chairman of Li Ting International.

Other members of delegation were includes Supervisor Yuan Li, Executive Director Tang Chao Song, Deputy General Manager Liu Liqiang and Group Coordinator Zhang Linhui.

The purpose of the meeting was to explore avenues of cultural exchanges, focusing on pan-cultural exports, visiting performances,



cultural products, circulation of new artworks, art exhibitions, cultural exhibitions, galleries, music, festivals, and more. Both parties stressed the pivotal role of enhancing cultural connections between Pakistan and China.

During the discussions, Minister Jamal Shah highlighted the robust bond between the two nations and unveiled plans for the second China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) cultural caravan. This initiative aims to bolster economic ties and strengthen cultural bonds

collaboration between the two nations in the creation of "Batie Girl," a film released in Pakistan in 2023. The movie, a milestone in cultural cooperation, signifies the vibrant cultural exchange between the countries.

Minister Jamal Shah showcased Pakistan's rich artistic heritage, inviting Chinese companies to contribute to the growth of both nations' film industries. Expressing interest in establishing cinema houses in Pakistan, he highlighted the nation's 157 cinema houses and its aspiration to expand the cinema industry.

Zhang Yang, Chairman of Chang Jian group, emphasized the plethora of collaboration opportunities in the entertainment industry. He expressed Chinese delegation have interest in investing in the Pakistani drama and film industry for joint production, presenting Pakistan as a beautiful country and an attractive tourism destination.

In a separate meeting, Minister Jamal Shah expressed his pleasure at the

News Desk

1. Eat your way to a long life

It's not the first time a Mediterranean diet has been touted for its health benefits. Laden with fruits, veg, olive oil and fish, following this diet could add years to your life, a 20-year study conducted by researchers at the University of Barcelona suggested.

Meanwhile, researchers at Brigham and Women's Hospital also found that sticking to a Mediterranean diet can boost longevity, as it features antioxidant ingredients with anti-inflammatory properties.

Registered dietician Clare Thornton-Wood sided with this research too. Speaking to Business Insider, she called this famed diet "one of the best eating patterns to consider from a longevity and anti-ageing perspective".

Remember the five workout pillars

It's easy to start moving less as we age, but implementing the habit of working out consistently in your 20s and 30s could set you up for life.

Whatever your age, personal trainer and sports scientist Luke Worthington told Insider that about five 'fitness pillars' we'd do well to remember to get the most out of our exercise:

1. Strength
2. Cardiovascular fitness

3. Mobility
4. Body composition
5. Emotional well-being

Put your heart health first
Preventative cardiologist Dr Nicole Harkin also weighed into what habits we can implement earlier in our life to live longer. She explained: "The choices and lifestyle habits you develop now can make a big impact on your heart health in the future."

"In particular, if you have a strong



family history of heart disease, it's important to lay the foundation for a proactive heart health plan now."

Cardiovascular disease—which affects the heart or blood vessels—is one of the main causes of death and disability in the UK, but it can often largely be prevented by leading a healthy lifestyle, the NHS said.

Take care of your skin
Something as small as putting on sun

cream daily—and especially on sunny days—can go a long way in protecting you from skin cancer, which kills thousands of Brits yearly. It was reported this year that melanoma cases had reached record highs in the UK and are expected to double again by 2040.

And though non-melanoma cancers—which include squamous and basal cell carcinoma—are considered less dangerous than melanoma, recent research has shown that non-melanomas now kill more people worldwide as they're so common.

Board certified dermatologist, Dr Charles Putza recommended you slap on sun cream daily.

5. Protect your brain

Taking care of your brain can sound like no mean feat, but doing many of the activities already listed above can actually be super beneficial.

Dr Dale Bredesen, a neuroscience researcher at the Buck Institute for Research on Aging in California said improving brain health is tied to boosting the health of your whole body.

Your diet can play a large role, so he recommended eating lots of plants—especially cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli and kale—and minimising your intake of ultra-processed foods.

Getting enough exercise and sleep can also give your brain a boost.

Displaced Gazans flee again as Israel launches fresh tank, air assaults

Reuters

GAZA: Tens of thousands of fleeing Palestinians sought shelter on Friday (Dec 29) as Israeli tanks pushed through the central Gaza Strip, with more than 180 people reported killed in 24 hours of airstrikes and artillery barrages on the shattered enclave.

Israeli warplanes attacking the south of Gaza flattened homes and buried families as they slept, residents said.

The assaults in central and southern Gaza propelled a new exodus of people already driven from other areas in what Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant called an essential stage of Israel's mission to destroy its foe Hamas.

Twelve weeks after Hamas militants stormed Israeli towns, killing 1,200 people and seizing

240 hostages, Israeli forces have laid much of the Gaza Strip to waste.

Nearly all of its 2.3 million people have fled their homes at least once and many are now on the move again, often reduced to taking shelter in makeshift tents or huddled under tarpaulins and plastic sheets on open ground.

Gaza health authorities said 187 more Palestinians were confirmed killed in Israeli strikes in the last 24 hours, raising the toll to 21,507—about 1 per cent of Gaza's population. Thousands more bodies are feared to be buried in the ruins of obliterated neighbourhoods.

In Rafah in the south, Reuters journalists at the scene of one airstrike that destroyed a building saw the head of a buried toddler sticking out of the rubble.

The child screamed as a rescue worker shielded his head with a hand, while another swung a sledgehammer at a chisel, trying to break up a slab of concrete to free him.

Neighbour Sanad Abu Tabet said the two-storey house had been crowded with displaced people. After morning broke, relatives went to collect the dead wrapped up in white shrouds. A man peeled away the cloth to stroke the face of a dead child.

Tens of thousands of Gazans are fleeing the crowded central districts of Bureij, Maghazi and Nusseirat, ordered out by Israeli forces whose tanks advanced from the north and east.

Most have made their way south or west to the already overwhelmed city of Deir al-Balah. "We suffered a lot. We had the

whole night without shelter, under rain and it was cold, we were with our kids and elderly women," said Um Hamdi, a woman cooking porridge over an open woodfire surrounded by children.

Nearby, Abdel Nasser Awadallah stood inside a wooden frame set up to be wrapped in plastic to make a tent, and spoke of the family he had lost.

"I buried my children—a child 16 years old, another one aged 18. Something I really can't believe, I buried my children at 6 a.m. while their bodies were still warm. Also my nephew, he was 2 years old, I buried him. I buried my wife," he said.

"I never thought in my life that I will bury my children, I thought they would bury me."

Israel says it is doing what it can to avoid civilian casualties, but the



high death toll has caused concern even amongst its staunchest allies.

The US has called for it to scale down the war in coming weeks and move to targeted operations against Hamas leaders. So far Israel shows no sign of doing so.

Footage filmed by a Palestinian Red Crescent volunteer in Maghazi showed dead and wounded being carried from ruined buildings.

In the south, Israeli forces have been pounding Khan Younis in

preparation for an anticipated further advance into the main southern city, swaths of which they captured in early December.

Defence Minister Gallant said troops were reaching Hamas command centres and arms depots.

"Our operations are essential to achieving the goals of the war," he said.

The Israeli military also said it had destroyed a tunnel complex in the basement of one of the houses of the Hamas leader for Gaza, Yahya Sinwar, in Gaza City.

The shaft led to a network designed for lengthy stays and combat command and was fitted with electricity, an elevator, prayer rooms, bathrooms and air conditioning, it said. It made no mention of Sinwar's possible whereabouts.

Shahid Mir appointed as acting president of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Bank

Abdul Majeed Tahir

MUZAFFARABAD: Prominent and well-seasoned Banker and senior official of Bank of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Mr. Shahid Mir has been elevated as Acting President of Bank of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. In this regard, an official notification has been issued by the Government of Azad Kashmir.



Political, social and public people all walks of life mentioned the Government initiative is highly appreciated and congratulations to him on his appointment.

CCP directs consumer brands to make full disclosure on product discounts

PPA



ISLAMABAD: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) advises shoe and clothing brands offering discounts to ensure complete and visible disclosures regarding actual and discounted prices. Brands violating this directive may face enforcement actions by the CCP.

During the ongoing seasonal surge in discounts, particularly within clothing and shoe brands, CCP uncovered instances of deceptive marketing practices. Preliminary investigations indicate that such practices may violate Section 10 of the Competition Act, 2010, constituting deceptive marketing.

The CCP's survey and preliminary probe identified 27 brands offering 'flat' discounts on their products. However, CCP noticed that the 'Flat discount' didn't apply to all items. The discount advertised outside the shop was higher than the actual sale prices inside. The disclaimer about 'Terms & Conditions' had an illegible font size. In numerous cases, 'Terms & Conditions' weren't mentioned at all.

Additionally, certain offers, like 'Flat 50% plus 20% on bank cards,' had differing terms for online and retail purchases, leading to confusion and potentially misleading consumers into uninformed purchases. These discrepancies were observed in approximately 96% of the outlets surveyed.

FBR tax collection in six months crosses target set by IMF

PNP



ISLAMABAD: The Federal Board of Revenue has crossed the IMF's tax target in first six months of the current fiscal year.

"The International Monetary Fund (IMF) had set Rs 4.425 trillion revenue collection target for six months while Rs 4.44 trillion tax has been collected in the period," sources said.

The target was 35% above in comparison to last six months of the previous year.

According to sources, the FBR collected 2.13 trillion with 730 billion increase in income tax, while 1.5 trillion were collected in sales tax and 265 billion rupees in federal excise duty.

The revenue board collected 540 billion rupees in customs duty, which were 100 billion rupees down to the set target.

More than 50 billion rupees target has been set for the last two days of the year.

All FBR offices and banks have been directed to keep open on Saturday and Sunday till late night for tax collection.

The tax defaulters' telephone, electricity and gas connections will be disconnected under the IMF conditions.

First Logistics Centre for Red Chillies in Bhawalpur marks significant milestone

PNP

BHAWALPUR: Organic Pakistan, a pioneer in sustainable solutions for Agriculture, Food, Health, and Environmental Security, marked a significant milestone with the official visit of Organic Pakistan's CEO Muhammad Nadeem Iqbal and Operations Head, Mr. Peter Huang, Commercial Head, LTEC International Agriculture Development Company, to Pakistan's First Logistics Centre for Red Chillies. This state-of-the-art facility is a pivotal component of the VALUE-added Supply Chain, an ambitious project by Organic Pakistan.

The Logistics Centre, designed as part of the innovative project, aims to empower farmers by providing essential technical knowledge and high-quality inputs directly from manufacturers, including fertilizers, pesticides, and seeds. Key features of the Centre include the collection of Red Dried and Red Wet Chillies, solar-dried tunnels for drying, warehousing for storing Red Dried Chillies, and facilities for packaging and

dispatches for export.

One of the groundbreaking features of the Centre is its red Chillies drying facility, meticulously designed to meet the stringent standards demanded by international buyers. Additionally, farmers participating in the program will benefit from buy-back arrangements, ensuring a fair and pre-agreed price at the time of sowing.

"At Organic Pakistan, our commitment goes beyond conventional boundaries. We are architects of transformative vision, driven by relentless passion and research-based innovation," stated Muhammad Nadeem Iqbal, CEO of Organic Pakistan.

Established in 2006, Organic Pakistan has been steadfast in advancing sustainable solutions in Agriculture, Food, and Urban Farming, contributing to economic growth while safeguarding the environment. The organization's mission is clear - to cultivate a thriving food and agriculture industry that benefits growers, producers, and consumers.

Organic Pakistan proudly introduces logistic



centers, a groundbreaking initiative focused on global prosperity in the Food, Agriculture, and Health business. The logistic centers serves as a platform for direct farmer-to-business interactions between private enterprises in partner countries, promoting trade as a global tool for achieving poverty reduction, enhancing cooperation, promoting peace, ensuring prosperity, and protecting the planet.

The primary objective of logistic centers is

to establish;

"SABZ: Sustainable Agriculture Business Zones" providing Agriculture Trade Facilitation and Display facility with business matchmaking and Research and Development services across Pakistan. These centers integrate agricultural sustainability with economic growth, serving as pivotal hubs for Business-to-Government (B2G), Business-to-Business (B2B), Business-to-Consumer (B2C) and Farmer-to-Business interactions within the Food, Agriculture, Health, and Environment sectors.

Organic Pakistan remains committed to advancing Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security, contributing to the ambitious goal of zero hunger worldwide.

Organic Pakistan is a pioneering organization committed to advancing sustainable solutions in Agriculture, Food, Health, and Environmental Security. Established in 2006, the organization is dedicated to cultivating a thriving food and agriculture industry that benefits growers, producers, and consumers alike.

FCCI discusses increasing exports to Middle East as part of Pakistan Single Country Expo

Abdul Majeed

FAISALABAD: Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Dr. Khurram Tariq met the Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Middle East Rizwan Saeed Sheikh and discussed increasing Pakistani exports to Arab countries. Hafiz Shafiq Kashif, Canon of Standing Committee on GCC Region was also present on this occasion. Dr. Khurram Tariq said that Pakistan needs to make serious efforts to increase exports to the Middle East. He said that a delegation of Faisalabad Chamber was going to Saudi Arabia to perform Umrah, but now it has been linked to the Pakistan Single Country Expo in February so that the members of the Chamber can perform Umrah along with Saudi Arabia. They can also discuss with the traders to increase exports. Rizwan Saeed Sheikh told them that Sialkot Cham-



ber was represented in the previous expo, but now Faisalabad Chamber should take advantage of this opportunity. He said that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Pakistani ambassador in Saudi Arabia will provide all possible support to make the single country exhibition a success. He said that Saudi Arabia imports all kinds of goods, so the businessmen of Pakistan have

to find import partners in every sector and open export channels. He said that serious exporters of Pakistan can meet with reliable importers of Saudi Arabia during this expo. He said that an effort will be made to give official protocol to the delegation of Faisalabad Chamber so that they can meet representatives of other chambers including Riyadh, Madinah and Makkah.

Sindh Governor Tessori supports the initiative of Ride to Donate by inDrive in collaboration with JDC



PPA

KARACHI: In a ceremony dedicated to the distribution of winter kits to the underprivileged, Governor Sindh, Kamran Khan Tessori, lauded the praiseworthy efforts of inDrive and JDC in their joint initiative.

During the ceremony at the Governor House Sindh, Governor Kamran Tessori acknowledged individuals and organizations that are actively working for the betterment of Pakistan. Highlighting the noteworthy initiative undertaken by inDrive, Governor Tessori ensured full cooperation towards the noble cause. He lauded JDC as a true blessing for the underprivileged, commending the commendable spirit of these institutions

in serving humanity.

During the ceremony, inDrive, a leading transportation platform, talks about their vision for 'Ride to Donate' initiative. The campaign aims to provide winter kits to those in need. Recognizing the importance of community support in offering warmth, hope, and essential items to the less fortunate, inDrive has already distributed 800+ winter kits, spreading warmth throughout the community.

Mr. Zafar Abbas, founder of JDC, added, "Empathy knows no season. With every winter kit, we knit together a story of care and warmth. Together, we're not just providing essentials; we're weaving a blanket of compassion for those in need."

Poverty

ISLAMABAD: Gypsy people are searching valuables from garbage dump outside Fruit and vegetables market for selling purpose as where such garbage is providing daily wages for such deserving people, it is also the main source of spreading germs in people visiting Fruit and Vegetables Market, which needs the immediate action of concern authority to prevent spreading diseases, in Federal Capital.



Photo: Online

Utility Stores to remain open today

PPA

ISLAMABAD: The Utility Store Corporation (USC) on Saturday that all USC outlets across the country will remain open on Sunday (today) for the "convenience of the public".

According to the USC spokesperson, consumers will have the opportunity to shop at USC outlets even on tomorrow's holiday, marking the last Sunday of the year.

Furthermore, the spokesperson mentioned that the stores will be closed on Sunday, January 7, 2024. Earlier in Dec, Utility Store

Corporation (USC) reduced the Ghee and cooking oil prices of well-known brands across the country.

The spokesman said that the price of ghee of well-known brands had been reduced by 17 rupees per kg. While the prices of cooking oil have been reduced from Rs.37 per liter to Rs.48 per liter, said a press release issued here.

Ghee will be available at Rs 482 per kg instead of Rs 499, while cooking oil will be available at Rs 470 to Rs 422 per liter and other branded cooking oil will be available at Rs 518 per liter instead of Rs 555.

Oil prices shed 10pc in 2023 as supply, demand concerns weigh

Agencies

NEW YORK: Crude futures lost over 10 per cent in 2023 in a tumultuous year of trading marked by geopolitical turmoil and concerns about the oil output levels of major producers around the world.

Brent crude on Friday, the last trading day of the year, settled at \$77.04 a barrel, down 11 cents or 0.14. US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude settled at \$71.65 a barrel, down 12 cents or 0.17pc.

Both contracts slipped more than 10pc in 2023 to close out the year at their lowest year-end levels since 2020.

Brent had climbed 10pc and WTI by 7pc last year, supported by supply concerns following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

A Reuters survey of 34 economists and analysts forecast Brent crude will average \$82.56 in 2024, down from November's \$84.43 consensus, as they expect weak global growth to cap demand. Ongoing geopolitical tensions could provide support to prices.

Analysts have also questioned whether the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies, or OPEC+, will be able to commit to the supply cuts they have pledged to prop up prices.

OPEC+ is currently cutting output by around 6 million barrels per day, representing about 6pc of global supply.

OPEC is facing weakening demand for its crude in the first half of 2024 just as its global market share declines to the lowest level since the pandemic

on output cuts and Angola's exit from the group.

Meanwhile, the war in the Middle East prompted jitters about potential supply disruptions in the final few months of 2023 that are expected to last into 2024.

"We are going to see continued volatility as we go into 2024 with the geopolitical events and the fear that the conflict could spread throughout the region," said Andrew Lipow, president of Lipow Oil Associates.

This month, attacks by Yemen's Houthi militant group on shipping vessels transiting the Red Sea route forced major firms to reroute their shipments.

Although certain companies are preparing to resume movements through the Suez Canal, some crude oil and refined product tankers

are still opting for the longer route around Africa to avoid potential conflicts in the region.

Geopolitical tensions in the Middle East escalated on the last day of 2023 as Israel intensified its attacks in southern Gaza, putting upward pressure on prices.

Data released on Friday by the US Energy Information Administration (EIA) that showed strong oil demand in October offered some support to prices in intra-day trading, said UBS analyst Giovanni Staunovo.

Total US oil demand rose 3.4pc in October versus the prior year, the report said.

US crude oil output fell slightly in October to 13.248 million barrels per day, after it set monthly records in August and September.

Energy firms this week added oil



and natural gas rigs for the first time in three weeks, energy services firm Baker Hughes said in a report on Friday, indicating output could rise

in the future. For the year, however, the rig count was down by 157 after gaining by 193 in 2022 and 235 in 2021.

A glimpse at Pakistan's 2023 in major sports

Syed Ahsan Ali Jaffri

From putting on a disastrous show in the national sport, Hockey, to achieving historic milestones in Football, Mountaineering and Snooker. Here's a brief review of an eventful 2023 for Pakistan in major sports, barring Cricket.

2023 ushers fresh hopes for Pakistan Football

While the year 2022 was a sigh of relief for Pakistan football as the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) lifted the ban on the country and restored its international status, this year had some important firsts and historic achievements for the nation in the sport.

Pakistan men's football team participated in two major tournaments this year – a four-nation tournament and the South Asian Football Federation (SAFF) Championship.



The national women's football team also glimmered a ray of hope for a better future in the sport with two major victories in 2023.

Pakistan's women's team began their journey to success in January 2023 with a second-place finish in the Four Nation Cup held in Saudi Arabia.

They started the tournament on a positive note as they edged Comoros 1-0 – courtesy of Anmol Hira's late winner – to claim their second consecutive victory since FIFA lifted the ban on the Pakistan Football Federation last year.

Their brief winning run was soon hindered by Mauritius, who beat them 2-1. The women's team then settled for a hard-fought 1-1 draw against Saudi Arabia to finish second.

After a successful tournament, the Pakistan women's football team set their sights on the Paris Olympics Qualifier.

But they did not fare well in the Qualifiers and bowed out of the qualification race as they lost 2-0 to Hong Kong and 4-0 to the Philippines in the first two group games before claiming a historic victory over Tajikistan.

The 1-0 victory over Tajikistan marked Pakistan women's first major victory since their international return.

Previously, they had only tasted triumphs in friendly matches or exhibition tournaments like the four-nation cup in Saudi Arabia.

Dark clouds continue to loom over national sports

Pakistan continued sinking to new lows in their national sport Hockey as the year 2023 marked another disappointing year for the national team.

The national men's team participated in one major tournament this year – the Asian Champions Trophy – as they failed to qualify for yet another World Cup.



Pakistan started their Asian Champions Trophy campaign with a 3-1 defeat against Malaysia before holding Korea 1-1 and Japan 3-3 for draws.

The team then finally tasted their first victory when they edged China 2-1 but a 4-0 thrashing at the hands of arch-rivals India sent them crashing out of the tournament.

Pakistan then blew China 6-1 in the

ranking match and finished fifth in the six-team tournament.

The team had a below-par performance in 2023 as they won, lost and drew two games each out of the six matches.

On the other hand, Pakistan's Junior Hockey team featured in two major events – the Asia Cup and World Cup.

The junior side progressed well in the Asia Cup and soared to the final where their arch-rivals India edged them by the scoreline of 2-1 to clinch their fourth title.

The junior team's performance dipped in the World Cup as they finished eighth in the 16-team mega event.

Pakistan started their campaign with a hard-fought draw against the Netherlands before thrashing New Zealand 4-0 to register their maiden victory in the global event.

The Men in Green then held Belgium for a 1-1 draw and qualified for the quarter-finals.

They met Spain in the quarter-final and suffered a 4-2 defeat which sent them out crashing. The national junior team then played several ranking matches and finished eighth in the global event.

Mountaineers keep amassing new

heights for Pakistan

It was undoubtedly a remarkable year for Pakistan in Mountaineering with renowned climber Naila Kiani leading the way with historic achievements and many firsts.

With her astounding grit and determination, Kiani stunned the world and became the first Pakistani woman mountaineer to summit 10 peaks above 8,000 metres.



She also became the only Pakistani to ascend seven peaks above 8,000m in six months.

In a ground-breaking year, Kiani summit Nepal's Annapurna Peak – the 10th-highest peak standing at 8,091m tall – and Lhotse – the fourth-highest at 8,516m.

In July, Kiani, alongside Samina Baig, became the first Pakistani women to scale the ninth-highest peak in the world Nanga Parbat.

In the same month, she became the first Pakistani woman to scale the world's 12th-highest mountain Broad Peak, at 8,051m.

Lastly, Kiani and Sirbaz Khan made history by becoming the first Pakistani duo to successfully summit Cho Oyu, the world's sixth-highest peak towering at 8,201m in Tibet, China.

Besides her, Sajid Ali Sadpara also recorded a historic achievement when he ascended the world's tallest peak, 8,849m-tall Mount Everest without supplemental oxygen.

Moreover, emerging mountaineer Shehroze Kashif became the youngest in the world to scale 12 peaks above 8000m as he summited Nepal's Manaslu, the world's eighth-highest mountain at 8,163m.

Cueists chalk Pakistan's emergence

in the Snooker World

The year 2023 brought immense delight for Pakistan in snooker as top national cueists, including Ahsan Ramzan, Muhammad Asif and Asjad Iqbal, recorded unforgettable victories for the country.

Pakistan's teenage Snooker sensation Ramzan, who won the International Billiards and Snooker Federation (IBSF) World Snooker Championship last year, continued to prove his mettle on the global stage as he added another coveted title to his cabinet.

Ramzan partook in the U21 Asian Snooker Championship, held in Iran, continued his rich vein of form in the continental event and remained unbeaten.



He outclassed Iranian opponent Milad Pourali Darehchi with a score of 5-2 (48-46, 70-5(41), 61-6(52), 62-29, 30-71, 55-67, 101-27) to get his hands on the silverware.

Besides Ramzan, Pakistan's professional players Asjad and Asif also claimed notable achievements in 2023.

Muhammad Asif made Pakistan proud on Independence Day when he stunned seven-time world champion Stephen Hendry in the qualifying round of the ongoing British Open 2023.

Earlier in January, Asjad Iqbal enjoyed a dream campaign at the Snooker Shootout when he downed former English Open runner-up David Gilbert and former European Masters winner Jimmy Robertson on the same day, indicating a bright future for the nation in the sport.

South Africa suffer injury blow ahead of second Test against India

A Sports

CENTURION: Right-arm pacer Gerald Coetzee has been ruled out of the second Test between hosts South Africa and India, due to pelvic inflammation.

In a statement released by Cricket South Africa (CSA), the cricketing body shared that Coetzee developed Pelvic inflammation which got "progressively worse while bowling" in the final innings of the first Test.

Gerald Coetzee was consequently sent for scans on Friday, which revealed the extent of the injury, the CSA revealed



further.

Meanwhile, South Africa's Test coach Conrad Shukri decided to release the pacer from the squad "as a precautionary measure," but it remains uncertain

whether he will be fit for the SA20, starting from January 10.

Notably, Coetzee could bowl only five overs in India's second innings before leaving the field with the discomfort.

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His absence in the final innings, however, did not cost South Africa much as the hosts romped to a thumping victory by an innings and 32 runs.

He did not return to the field in India's batting debacle and Tristan Stubbs took over fielding duties for the rest of the match.

Gerald Coetzee marked the second injury blow to South Africa in the ongoing series as their captain Temba Bavuma was earlier ruled out of the series remainder on Thursday.

As a result, Zubayr Hamza has been called up to South Africa's squad as a batting replacement for Bavuma while Stubbs is also in the squad.

The CSA, thus far, have not named Gerald Coetzee's replacement for the second Test since they have enough pacers in their arsenal in the form of Lungi Ngidi and all-rounder Wiaan Mulder.

Pat Cummins reacts to Mohammad Hafeez's 'better than the other team' remarks

A Sports

MELBOURNE: Australia's captain Pat Cummins to Pakistan Cricket Team Director Mohammad Hafeez remarks regarding the better team of the Boxing Day Test.

The enthralling Boxing Day Test between Pakistan and Australia concluded on the fourth day when Pakistan, in pursuit of 317, bundled out on 237 in the second innings.

The touring side was at one stage in a comfortable position to seal a historic

victory when they required a further 100 runs with five wickets in hand.

However, Mohammad Rizwan's debated dismissal off Pat Cummins opened the floodgates for Pakistan and they collapsed from 219/5 to 237 all out.

Meanwhile, Pakistan Cricket Team Director Mohammad Hafeez not only criticized the umpiring in the Boxing Day Test but also claimed that the touring side played "better than the other team".

"The whole game, I will sum up, our



Pakistan team played better than the other team in general," stated Hafeez.

Later in the post-match press conference, Pat Cummins reacted to Moham-

mad Hafeez's remarks and highlighted the end result with a witty smile.

"Ahhhh. Cool. They played well. I am glad we got the win," stated Cummins.

"It doesn't really matter, does it? It is the team who wins at the end," he added.

For the unversed, Australia took an unassailable 2-0 lead over Pakistan in the three-match Test series with a 79-run victory in the second Test.

The two sides will now square off in the third Test in Sydney, scheduled to commence on January 3.

Sri Lanka Cricket name new white-ball captains for Zimbabwe series

A Sports

COLOMBO: The Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) on Saturday, named wicketkeeper batter Kusal Mendis and star all-rounder Wanindu Hasaranga as the ODI and T20I captains respectively for the home white-ball series against Zimbabwe.



Sri Lanka are scheduled to take Zimbabwe in a three-match each ODI and T20I series in January at the Rana Premadasa Stadium. The three-match series will kick start Sri Lanka's preparations for this year's T20 World Cup, scheduled to be co-hosted by the United States of America (USA) and the West Indies.

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The SLC further revealed that their selection committee, led by former cricket Upul Tharanga finalized preliminary ODI and T20I squads for the home series against Zimbabwe.

The final squads for both ODIs and T20Is will be selected from the preliminary list in due course.

Preliminary ODI squad: Kusal Mendis (c), Charith Asalanka (vc), Pathum Nissanka, Avishka Fernando, Sadeera Samarawickrama, Sahan Arachchige, Nuwanidu Fernando, Dasun Shanaka, Kamindu Mendis, Chamika Karunaratne, Janith Liyanage, Wanindu Hasaranga, Maheesh Theekshana, Dilshan Madushanka, Dushmantha Chameera, Dunith Wellalage, Pramod Madushan, Asitha Fernando, Akila Dananjaya, Jeffrey Vandersay, Chamika Gunasekera.

Preliminary T20I squad: Wanindu Hasaranga (c), Charith Asalanka (vc), Pathum Nissanka, Kusal Mendis, Sadeera Samarawickrama, Dasun Shanaka, Angelo Mathews, Dhananjaya de Silva, Maheesh Theekshana, Kusal Janith Perera, Bhanuka Rajapaksa, Kamindu Mendis, Dunith Wellalage, Akila Dananjaya, Jeffrey Vandersay, Chamika Karunaratne, Dushmantha Chameera, Dilshan Madushanka, Binura Fernando, Nuwan Thushara, Pramod Madushan, Matheesha Pathirana.

Klopp expects Liverpool to maintain title bid without Mohamed Salah

Sports Desk

Jürgen Klopp is adamant Liverpool will be able to maintain their Premier League title charge despite the imminent loss of Mohamed Salah to African Cup of Nations duty.

Salah will leave to play for Egypt at the African Cup of Nations after Liverpool host Newcastle in the Premier League on Monday.

Liverpool sit two points clear of Arsenal at the top as they chase a first title since 2020.

They also take on Arsenal in the FA Cup third round and Fulham in the League Cup semi-finals in January, meaning Salah's absence could not come

at a worse time.

Mohamed Salah is Liverpool's top scorer with 16 goals this term and his absence in the Ivory Coast, for potentially over a month if Egypt go deep into the tournament, leaves Klopp with a major void to fill.

"It is not the first time, it is a really at least very average situation that you lose your goalscorer but we had it even worse in the past when Sadio (Mane) and Mo left," Klopp told reporters on Friday.

"We came somehow through it and traditionally one of them went pretty far in the tournament, which made it worse."

Jürgen Klopp will also be without Japan midfielder Wataru Endo while he plays at the Asia Cup at the same time as Salah

departs.

"We knew the Africa Cup of Nations from time to time appears and Mo has to go and we have Endo as a participant of the Asia Cup as well, so it is like it is. We have to deal with it and we will," Klopp said.

"Each long-term plan I could have had depends massively on who is available. We would have solutions today, I hope we have that after the Newcastle game as well."

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The return of Diogo Jota after a month out injured is a boost as the Portugal international scored a comeback goal against Burnley on Boxing Day.

Jota's versatility means he can operate across the forward line,



as can Cody Gakpo, while Harvey Elliott has played in Mohamed

Salah's position even though he is more of a midfielder in Klopp's

system. "The return of each of the boys

is super-important but Diogo especially. Everybody was quite positive about our five options, but I don't think we had it that often to be honest," Klopp said.

"Especially with the amount of games we play it is so important these boys can rotate and now with Mo leaving and Endo leaving we need everyone to get back."

However, Liverpool left-back Andy Robertson's recovery from a dislocated shoulder is now likely to keep him out now for the whole of January.

The Scotland captain, sidelined since October, was expected to return next month.

"Robbo still needs more range in his shoulder. Obviously it was a big surgery, still not even close to team training or whatever," Klopp said.

Addressing

KARACHI: Chief of the Naval Staff Naveed Ashraf addressing the parade during 120th Midshipmen and 28th SSC Course Commissioning Parade at Pakistan Naval Academy Manora on Saturday.



120th Midshipmen, 28th SSC Parade held at Pakistan Naval Academy

Bureau Report

KARACHI: The Course Commissioning Parade of 120th Midshipmen and 28th Short Service Commission (SSC) was held here at the Pakistan Naval Academy (PNA) on Saturday. Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. The commissioning contingent comprised 88 Midshipmen out of which 60 were from Pakistan, 01 from the Kingdom of Bahrain, and 27 from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia along with 44 officers of SSC Course including 12 lady officers, a Pakistan Navy news release said.

While emphasising on geo-strategic environment, the

Chief of the Naval Staff asserted that peace and stability in South Asia will remain elusive unless the long-standing issue of Kashmir is resolved in accordance with the aspirations of its people and the UNSC resolutions. He urged the international community to play its role in the cessation of human rights violations and atrocities in the illegally occupied Indian-held Jammu and Kashmir whose citizens must be allowed to exercise their right to self-determination. During his address, Naval Chief also emphasised the immediate need to end the sufferings in Gaza as indiscriminate use of force on Palestinian civilians is a gross violation of human rights and war crimes that must cease forth-

with. He further reiterated that Pakistan would continue its diplomatic, moral, and principled support to Palestinians and urged for a just, comprehensive, and enduring solution to the Palestinian question, in line with relevant UN resolutions. He added that Pakistan looks forward to a stable and secure Afghanistan; which is key to regional integration, growth, and prosperity. The Chief Guest felicitated the commissioning term and their parents. He commended the parents for instilling a spirit in their children to serve the nation, which ultimately led them to join this prestigious Service. He also lauded the Pakistan Naval Academy for imparting quality training and expressed his hope that

cadets from friendly countries trained at PNA will serve as our brand-ambassadors to enhance bonds of endearment and affinity. Chief of the Naval Staff also advised the youth on a new dimension of warfare, which is the use of social media for disinformation, that has become an essential segment of fifth-generation warfare. Later, the Chief Guest gave away awards to the distinction holders. The prestigious Quaid-i-Azam Gold Medal was awarded to Lt Muhammad Talha Masood PN for his overall best performance. Midshipman Ayan Yameen claimed the coveted Sword of Honour, whereas Midshipman Sanaullah Safer clinched the Academy's Dirk. Officer Cadet Abdullah Waheed was

awarded the Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee Gold Medal, Officer Cadet Sultan Abdulrahman Hamad Saleh Alrowaie received the Chief of the Naval Staff Gold Medal while Commandant Gold Medal was awarded to Officer Cadet Asia Safdar from the Short Service Commission Course. Proficiency Banner was claimed by Fox 1 Squadron. Earlier in his welcome address, Commandant Pakistan Naval Academy Commodore Muhammad Khalid highlighted the main characteristics of academic and professional training afforded to Pakistani as well as friendly countries cadets. The parade was attended by senior civil, and military officials and parents of cadets.

Weekly inflation clocked over 43pc

Food prices and energy tariffs are worsening cost-of-living crisis

Tooba Khan

Chicken and eggs as well as vegetables were among the items that pushed the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI) up yet again on year-on-year basis to 43.25 per cent as food inflation combined with rising energy tariffs continue worsening the cost-of-living crisis in Pakistan.

Stagnant wages in the absence of any direct government cash support means purchasing power is shrinking at a rate that is unprecedented in the country's history.

With more increase in power and gas tariffs on the cards, there is very little likelihood of taming inflation despite the predictions made by the central bank and the government authorities.

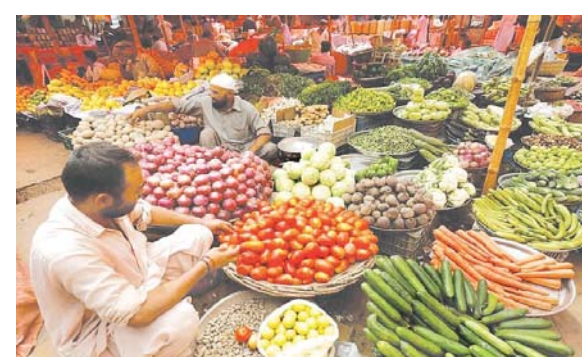
One of the important but

ignored facts is the booming food exports which are responsible for reduced supply and rising prices in the country – a trend showing complete lack of understanding or, at least, will on the part of government.

India just across our eastern border could have been a guide in respect, but no one has followed the example of New Delhi barring or imposing restrictions on exports of rice, onion and other food items – a policy designed to stabilise the domestic market and arrest inflation.

The figures released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) show that the SPI stood at 311.14 for the week ending December 29 compared to 310 recorded for the previous week and 217.20 last year.

However, the actual food inflation is much higher than the numbers given as the



food prices charged from the consumers are much higher than the official rates.

Earlier, the inflation rate in November – calculated by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) – had surged to 29.2pc on annual basis, which missed the estimates given by the State Bank of Pakistan and the finance ministry.

In the given scenario, the persistent rise in inflation means the rate record-

and developing included – where rate cuts are imminent next year, a possibility that is already weakening the US dollar in global currency markets – at least in the first quarter.

The higher interest rates will keep the economy crippled, thus no expansion in business activity and creation of job opportunities.

However, the only thing that Pakistan can hope for is a stable elected government after the February 8 elections, which is pro-business and has the will as well as the capacity to control prices and cut interest rates.

But the elements involved in May 9 violence are already making efforts and using fake news as a propaganda tool to make the whole electoral exercise controversial to create and maintain political instability for a long period.

PTI moves ECP against caretaker govt

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has filed a joint petition against caretaker governments in Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

As per details, 54 PTI candidates have filed a joint plea in ECP and made the federal, and provincial caretaker governments, 17 DROs and NADRA party in the matter.

The petition stated that the caretaker government is depriving PTI of their constitutional rights as the party's election candidates are being arrested from Returning Officers' offices.

The petition filed by PTI counsel Intazar Hussain Panjutha also includes the details of incidents that occurred in 49 constituencies.

Fawad Chaudhry sent on six-day physical remand in corruption case



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: An accountability court in Islamabad on Saturday granted a six-day physical remand of former federal minister Fawad Chaudhry in a case about alleged irregularities in the dual carriageway project.

Accountability court Judge Muhammad Bashir heard the case while NAB Prosecutor Irfan Bhola, Investigating Officer (IO) Sohail Arif and Fawad's counsel, Faisal Fareed Chaudhry appeared before the court.

During the hearing, The NAB prosecutor argued that a 14-day remand was requested during the last hearing but 10 days were given.

Girls' school in Bannu set ablaze by miscreants

BANNU: Miscreants set fire to a girls' school in district Bannu's Meryan Tehsil Friday night amid an increase in militancy in the tribal region.

The overnight incident targeted the Government Girls Higher Secondary School in Kotka Mumbati Barakzai, which suffered significant damage. The school's science lab was turned to ashes.

The miscreants stole solar panels and other items and vandalised the school's boundary wall as well. They also wrote threatening graffiti near the main gate, warning of additional attacks if the school tried to resume classes.

In the wake of the incident, police officials collected evidence from the site, kicking off an investigation into the terror act, the District Police Officer Ifthikhar Khan said.

The schools in the district are currently closed due to the winter break. Meanwhile, the incident marks the first instance of a school being set ablaze in Bannu following the upswing in militant attacks which came after the government's decision to terminate the ceasefire with the outlawed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan last year.

Mushaal condoles demise of Prof Nazir Shawl



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Mushaal Hussien Mulick has expressed deep sorrow over the sad demise of Prof Nazir Shawl, a prominent figure in the Kashmir liberation movement, who breathed his last in London on Friday.

Mushaal Mulick said Professor Shawl, a multilingual individual, educator, poet, and human rights advocate, was a true pioneer in the struggle for the self-determination rights of the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

She said that Nazir's death is a significant loss to the global voice of the Kashmir cause.

Solangi grieved over demise of Kashmiri Hurriyat leader Nazir Shawl



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi expressed deep grief and sorrow over the demise of senior Kashmiri Hurriyat leader Professor Nazir Ahmad Shawl on Saturday. In his condolence message, the minister said he was deeply grieved to hear the sad news of the death of Professor Nazir Ahmad Shawl.

"Professor Nazir Ahmad Shawl was a brave, fearless, and sincere leader," Murtaza Solangi said, adding that with the demise of Nazir Ahmad

Shawl, Kashmir had lost a great leader. Appreciating the contribution of Nazir Shawl, Solangi said he was a strong voice for the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Kashmir who played an important role in highlighting the Kashmir issue at the global level.

Murtaza Solangi said Shawl's political and diplomatic services will always be remembered for the struggle for the inalienable right of self-determination of the Kashmiri people. He prayed to Allah Almighty to rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant courage to the bereaved family to bear this loss with fortitude.

PML-N takes GDA along in Sindh to form four-party alliance against PPP

Bureau Report

KARACHI: The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) have reached an agreement to collaborate and support each other in the upcoming general elections.

This development came during a meeting between PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif and GDA chief Pir Pagara, with PML-N leaders Khawaja Saad Rafique and Ayaz Sadiq also in attendance.

During the meeting, the two sides reached an agreement on a four-party seat adjustment formula.

This four-party alliance, according to sources, comprises the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA),

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F).

The primary objective of this electoral alliance is to challenge the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) in its political stronghold of Sindh, reportedly.

Former prime minister Shehbaz Sharif is currently leading a PML-N delegation to Sindh to form electoral alliances.

During the meeting, Shehbaz Sharif and Pir Pagara affirmed their commitment to collaboration, pledging to jointly participate in the forthcoming elections and extend mutual support as necessary.

The PML-N president noted that a single party held sway in the province for the past many years.

Fehmida Mirza and Zulfiqar Mirza's nomination papers rejected

Correspondent

BADIN: Former National Assembly speaker Fehmida Mirza's nomination papers for NA-223 were rejected.

Returning Officer Mohammad Nawaz rejected nomination papers of Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) candidate Fehmida Mirza, her spouse Zulfiqar Mirza and son Hussam Mirza for National Assembly seat NA-223.

People's Party candidate Rasool Bux Chandio had filed objection that the Mirza family has been bank loan defaulter.

Mirza family has been defaulter of a bank of 211.9 million rupees, DRO office Badin said. "The Sindh High

Court has also decided the matter in favour of the bank," according to DRO office.

Their nomination papers have been rejected in the light of the State Bank of Pakistan report, DRO said.



The counsel of a private bank Hamza Ali Chaudhry also appeared in the DRO office.

Mirza family has decided to challenge the decision in the high court, sources said.

Sanam Javed sent on two-day physical remand

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) activist Sanam Javed has been sent on two-day physical remand in a case pertaining to attack on PML-N

vandalism case.

Additional Session Judge Khalid Wazir heard the plea filed by police and granted a two-day physical remand of the PTI activist Sanam Javed.



house, As per details, the incarcerated PTI activist was presented before the session court in the PML-N house

Yesterday, the Lahore High Court (LHC) wrapped up Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) activist's plea against her detention.

The high court wrapped up Javed's petition against her detention. The lawyer apprised the court that the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Lahore took back detention orders against her.