

Former PM says PPP will ensure fair and transparent elections

Kiran Asim

MULTAN: Former Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani has said that no government can be formed without the People's Party, the level playing field should be equal for all, and the Election Commission should ensure fair and transparent elections in Multan and South Punjab. I am grateful to the Christian community for their support. We are always with the Christian community. In view of atrocities and massacres on Palestinians, prayers should be made for their freedom and stability of Pakistan on the occasion of the new year. These views were expressed by Christian leaders Bishop Leo Roderick Paul in a local hotel on Abdali Road, Former MNA Naveed Amir Jeeva was also present.

Pastor Naeem Javed, Ayub Javed, Pastor Atif, Pastor Faheem Shehzad, Pastor Aurangzeb. During the press conference along with Pastor Ali Ezer Tahir and others, Bishop Leo Rodak Paul, former MNA Naveed Amir Jeeva and Christian leaders announced their support for PPP candidates in South Punjab including Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani and Multan. Announcing the

election campaign and welcoming the ticket to Naveed Amir Jeeva and on this occasion Bishop Leo Roderick Paul said that Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani always stood by the minorities and truly fought for the solution of their problems. All of us are standing by his side while Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani further said that martyr Ms. Benazir Bhutto also always preferred minorities.

When our era came, we amended the constitution and gave them four seats and now we have also given the ticket to Naveed Amir Jeeva for the third time in the National Assembly seat, and we have also cut jails and workers have also made great sacrifices. In response to a question, he said that we have implemented 85% of democracy for example, which is the agreement of the Charter of Democracy between Shaheed Ms. Benazir Bhutto and Mian Nawaz Sharif. It was decided that the party will complete the democracy. The party is the only ideological party in Pakistan whose sacrifices for the sake of the beloved country of Pakistan can never be forgotten. So many steps were taken.

The living example of which is International Airport, Motorway Flyovers,



Yousuf Raza Gillani Cadet College was approved, due to which the people of South Punjab will get more employment opportunities. But I am a senator till 2027, yet again I am in front of the people. He further said that the chairman of the party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, has started the election meet-

ings from Garhi Khuda Bakhsh and he is also telling the 10-points manifesto to the whole nation of Sindh, Balochistan. After KPK, they will soon hold rallies in Punjab and tell the people about their manifesto.

In response to another question, he said that the People's Party and the

PMLN are different parties, but the People's Party is an ideological party and is participating in the election in a democratic manner according to its program. In response to a question, he said that regarding the CPEC project, the Ministry of Pakistan has approved 175 acres of land so that the people of

South Punjab including Multan can also benefit from the CPEC project. Similarly, the Shujaabad flyover has also been approved, which will be completed by June, due to which the citizens will have the best travel facility. This project will also be completed soon.

Test of poverty

MULTAN: Under the Benazir Income Support Program, a large number of Women's are waiting for their turn at the retail shop in the bitterly cold weather from morning to evening to receive the financial assistance amount 12000 after three month.



Photo: Asim Tanveer

Over 200 political candidates for Attock assembly and 5 seats approved

Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: In the examination of the first phase of the elections to be held on February 8, 195 candidates nominated themselves from political parties in 2 seats of the National Assembly and 5 seats of the Provincial Assembly of Attock district. Out of which 164 candidates have been approved, Muslim League (N), Pakistan People's Party, Jamaat-e-Islami, Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, apart from Aza in the remaining seats of Attock. Diet of the candidates approved While no Tehreek-e-Insaf candidates have been approved for 2 seats of the National Assembly and 5 seats of the Provincial Assembly,

the political candidates of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf have not been approved. Decision to go for appeal and justice in courts, according to details in NA 49 Attock I, Sheikh Aftab Ahmed Muslim League (N), Malik Muhammad Amin Aslam Azad Umidwar, Muhammad Anas Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, Iqbal Khan Jamaat-e-Islami, Malik Shamsheer Islam Azad, Khurram Shahzad Pakistan Peoples Party, Constituency NA 50 Attock I Sardar Saleem Haider Pakistan Peoples Party, Malik Sohail Khan Kamdial Muslim League (N), Hafiz Muhammad Saad Rizvi Tehreek Labeek Pakistan, Fakhruddin Razi Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, Malik Muhammad Ali Khan, Syed Ajaz Hussain Bukhari Advocate

Jamaat-e-Islami and other independent candidates are included. League (N), Hafiz Jaber Ali Jamaat-e-Islami, Muhammad Ibrahim Jamaat-e-Islam, Malik Muhammad Riley Khan Jamaat-e-Islami Constituency PP 2 Attock II Muhammad Shavez Khan Muslim League (N), Owais Islam Jamaat-e-Islami, Sardar R Salim Haider Pakistan People's Party, Constituency PP 3 Attock III Sheikh Nasir Mahmood Muslim League (N), Sardar Haider Ali Khan Pakistan People's Party, Syed Ijaz Hussain Bukhari Advocate Azad, Sardar Asim Nawaz Azad Muhammad Junaid Jamaat-e-Islami, Rana Afsar Ali Khan Advocate Azad, Shamsheer Aslam Azad, Hameed Akbar Khan Azad, Sardar Rahmat Ali Khan

Azad, Murad Butt and other candidates are also included, Constituency PP 4 Attock IV Ch. Hadri Sher Ali Khan, former minister, provincial minister from Muslim League (N) People's Party, Amanat Khan, Sardar Muhammad Wali, Sardar Shah Nawaz, son of Sardar Sarfraz, Sajad Hussain and other candidates, from Attock PP 5 Attock V. Aitbar Khan, Malik Bahadur Khan Azad, Muhammad Abdullah Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, Hafiz Tanveer Ahmed Jamaat-e-Islami other independent candidates also participated. After the meal was approved, Major (R) Tahir Sadiq, Ms. Iman Tahir, Ms. Zain Elahi, Ms. Insbat Naz Tahir, Qazi Ahmed Akbar, Zulfi Bukhari are among the prominent ones.

Health Minister Punjab visited the New Emergency Block of Children's Complex

Kiran Asim

MULTAN: Punjab Health Minister Dr. Javed Akram along with his team made a detailed visit to the new emergency block of the Children's Hospital Multan and reviewed the ongoing construction work in the Children's Hospital. Dean Children's Complex Professor Dr. Muhammad Kashif Chishti told the Health Minister that on experimental basis the children have been admitted to the new emergency and their treatment is ongoing, which was also reviewed by the Health Minister.



Caretaker Health Minister Dr. Javed Akram along with Dean Children's Hospital Prof. Dr. Kashif Chishti and MS Dr. Kamran Asif also inspected the newly constructed medical wards and OPD department and gave instructions to the senior officials of the building department to complete all the works. Complete as soon as possible and on time.

Forest officials SWL seized 2 trucks of wood and 8 lakh fine

Adam Khan Wazir

WANA: Under the direction of DFO South Waziristan Zeeshan and under the supervision of SDFO Wana, forest department staff with the help of police personnel conducted a successful operation on Sunday.

Authorities seized two trucks loaded with illegal woods in Tanai area of the Lower South Waziristan (SWL) tribal district.

A fine of Rs 800,000 has been imposed on both the trucks.

On this occasion, Forest Officer Azmat Wazir said that South Waziristan Forest Department is making great efforts that illegal woods should be prevented.

He said that no one can be allowed to do this kind of business, or take the woods to another city in the form of smuggling.

He further said that our staff has been strictly instructed by the higher authorities that the smuggled woods should not be left under any circumstances and immediate action should be taken against them.

Finally, Forest Officer Azmat Wazir said that trucks loaded with wood are not allowed at all circumstances and departmental action will be taken against them.

WASA chief says redressal of citizens' complaints top priority



Abdul Majid

FISALABAD: Managing Director WASA Amir Aziz has said that redressal of citizens' complaints is top priority for which all resources are being utilized. Officers have also been directed to get feedback from the concerned customer after resolving the complaint. Presiding over a meeting, he said that the complaints filed on the helpline and other platforms including the citizen portal are of utmost importance and all possible measures should be taken for their immediate redressal. MD WASA further said that the WASA officers who are guilty of delay in redressal of complaints should be issued show cause notices. There will be no compromise on the services provided to the citizens. He urged all the operations officers and staff to work with speed to resolve the complaints filed by the citizens so that the trust of the citizens in the institution can be further restored. MD Vasa also requested the citizens to ensure payment of their monthly bills and dues. Deputy Managing Directors Shoab Rashid, Usman Zia, Saqib Raza, Director I&C Umar Ifthikhar, Deputy Director CRC Mohammad Amin Dogar and other WASA officers were also present in the meeting.

Attackers on state intuitions how can hold public office-questioned PML leader

Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: Former provincial Minister Jehangir Khanzada has questioned that those who were involved in state institutions on May 9, could be allowed to hold public offices. He was talking to newsmen at his native town Hazro on Sunday. The former minister son of slain former provincial interior minister who fall victim of a suicide attack in his hometown of Shadi Khan in Attock on August 16, 2015, has said that those who today demands level playing field for the upcoming general elections of 2024, should first face the cases.

Wana Press Club selects new office bearers

Adam Khan Wazir

WANA: Elections for the year 2024 of District Press Club Wana under the supervision of Chairman Election Committee Adam Khan Wazir were completed on Sunday.

In South Waziristan Lower District Press Club Wana completed the elections and unanimously formed the cabinet.

On this occasion, Chairman Election Committee District Press Club Wana Adam Khan Wazir and member Shahzadin Wazir announced the new cabinet in the presence of journalists.

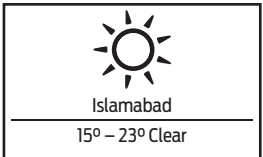


District Press Club Wana unanimously elected Mujeeb Ur Rehman Wazir as President and Irfan Ullah as General Secretary, while Naik Muhammad Wazir was elected as Chairman, Zardad Wazir as Finance

Secretary, Noor Ali as Vice President, Shahzain Senior as Vice President, Qismat Ullah as Press Secretary and Din Muhammad as Joint Secretary.

It should be noted, all office bearers were unanimously elected unopposed. Mujeeb Ur Rehman Wazir, the newly elected president of District Press Club Wana, said on this occasion that by eliminating all differences, they will raise their voice for the improvement of the press club and journalists.

He said, will raise voice for sweet land, national interests and public welfare issues and will take all the members of the press club along.



SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr5:43 am
Zohr12:10 pm
Asr3:31 pm
Maghrib5:09 pm
Isha6:38 pm

EMERGENCY

Rescue (Police)15
Bomb Disposal15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/
Islamabad1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance1122 &
& Rescue Services4451122
Motorway Police9266044
Motorway Police9270601-20

Women Police Stations

Islamabad9222596
Rawalpindi9270601-20

ENQUIRY

Edhi Ambulance115
PIA Flight Info114
PIA Cargo9280979
Railway Inquiry117
Railway Exchange9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi5555489
CAA9281092

HOSPITALS

CMH561111
MH561116
MH561116
Cantt Hospital9270907-11
DHQ5556311-4
RGH9290301-7
Holy Family9290322-7
PIMS9261170-79
Polyclinic9218300-09
Shifa International4603666

DEPARTMENTS

CDA9221334-43
CDA9208301-04
Met Office9250360-6
RDA5555864
TMA5770886
Cantonment Board9270151-3
Islamabad Metropolitan
Corporation9209224
Potohar Town9209224
Rawal Town5773343

COMPLAINTS

Water Tanker Service
E-7, F-10 & F-119204654
G-5, G-6, G-7, G-89203883
G-9, G-10, G-11, G-12, H-89266316
Wapda Islamabad9217579-80
Sui Gas Complaint119, 9272249
Wasa Water Tank
Rawalpindi0331-5022125

IESCO
resorts to 6-8 hour power load-management



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) has resorted to six to eight hours of power load-management in all operation circles of the company due to a gap in demand and supply. According to IESCO spokesperson, load management would be ended after the restoration of normal supply to the company from the national grid system. The company regretted the inconvenience to the valued consumers, he said. He said the load management schedule has already been uploaded at the IESCO website.

Ashrafi called implementation of Khilafat-e-Rashida principles for judicial reforms

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC) Chairman Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi on Sunday called for the implementation of the Khilafat-e-Rashida system in Pakistan, with the foremost demand being an equitable and unbiased justice system. Speaking at a seminar on Syedna Siddique Akbar, he highlighted that Pakistan, as an ideological state, is built on the principles of Khilafat-e-Rashida, with a focus on justice and fairness.

Highlighting the need to emulate first caliph Siddique Akbar's adherence to Islamic beliefs and duties, he asserted that universal Zakat contributions could alleviate hunger across the nation. Ashrafi stressed the importance of a robust Zakat system, asserting that with proper implementation, hunger could be eradicated. Expressing concern over the stagnant justice system after 76 years, he lamented the lack of accountability for those attacking state defense institutions and urged the judiciary to

deliver fair decisions, especially regarding the events of May 9. He expressed concern, stating that if the culprits of May 9 go unpunished, then Allah safeguards the nation. He questioned the impediments preventing their punishment and raised the issue of the necessity of military courts, suggesting a potential challenge in the absence of such a system. Ashrafi emphasized the deterioration of the justice system in the country and urged the Chief Justice of Pakistan to institute reforms in the lower-level courts.

Expressing condemnation for Israeli brutality in Palestine, he suggested that, rather than mere celebrations on the new year, Pakistanis should actively contribute financial aid to Palestinians and offer prayers for them.

Highlighting international perspectives, he expressed that the stance of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Arab League is to foster a consensus on the two-state solution, adding that discussions are proposed with Egypt and Qatar to address the Palestinian issue in a bid to secure a last-



ing ceasefire. Ashrafi said Commander-in-Chief of the Nation, General Syed Asim Munir, forthrightly conveyed to American leadership that persistent Israeli aggression could result in global repercussions affirming that Pakistan stands in solidarity with oppressed Palestine and

pledges unwavering support. He, paying tribute to Syedna Siddique Akbar, stated that Hazrat Siddique Akbar holds the esteemed position of being the first Caliph of Muslims. Emphasizing the fundamental tenet of the Khilafat system, he underscored the paramount role of justice adding that

regardless of one's religious affiliation, the scales of justice must remain impartial. Allama Zubair Abid, Maulana Islam Qadri, Maulana Qari Abdul Hakeem Athar, Maulana Mufti Falak Shabir, Maulana Mufti Anees, and Maulana Abdul Ghaffar were also present on the occasion.

Fragrances

ISLAMABAD: Women are busy buying flowers at flowers market sector F-6 in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online

KSA endows Special Funding for IIUI



PPA

ISLAMABAD: H. E. Dr Hathal Homoud Alotaibi, President, International Islamic University continuing his efforts to take university out of the financial crisis, managed to arrange more assistance from Saudi Arabia as salaries of the IIUI employees for the month of December were managed through the Saudi Financial Support Fund.

According to details, the total Budgetary Support in Shape of "Support for Payment of Salary" from Saudi Arabia to IIUI = 818 Million PKR. This including Budget Support for F/Y 2022-23 & Payment of arrears & allowances. Also, Payment of Salary for the Month of December 2023 = 300 Million PKR.

In addition, Budgetary Support in Shape of "Support for University Development Projects" makes a total of 86 Million PKR in this regard. Since his joining in 2020, H. E. Dr. Hathal Homoud through his reforms in the light of the strategic plan has led the university to manage salaries, arrears and developmental projects through Saudi funding. Moreover, a grand mosque during his tenure has already been approved by the Saudi government (with an estimated cost of about \$32 million) at the new campus of the university.

IIUI Rector, Dr. Samina Malik while thanking the Saudi Government for continuous support of the university has said that the university is an omen of strong bond between both brothers' countries. She said Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques has always been generous to support IIUI.

ITP issues over around one million fines, 48,347 new driving licenses

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) has taken 8,87,849 actions against traffic rules violations of various kinds during the year 2023, an ITP spokesperson said on Sunday.

According to him, overall the ITP took action against 8,86,698 vehicles and motorcycles for traffic violations while legal actions were also taken against 1,151 individuals for severe traffic violations.

He said that the actions were taken in compliance with the special directives of the Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan

The spokesperson shared that as many as 1,587 driving licenses were suspended while permits for 419 public transport vehicles were revoked. Additionally, 17,420 cars and 38,000 motorcycles involved in severe violations were impounded at various police stations.

Moreover, the ITP issued 48,347 new driving licenses, renewed 20,375 licenses upon expiry, and issued 95,333 learner permits. Furthermore, 10,930 duties were performed by traffic police officers and officials in various national and international delegations, assemblies, and public order situations. However, 32 officers were injured while performing their duties.

As per details, landmark achievements in the year included the establishment of a new Traffic Headquarter at Faizabad, a women's driving centre, an increase in penalties for traffic law violations, implementation of an internationally recognized driving license in two languages, integration of E-Challan system with criminal record as well as notification to concerned individuals before the expiration of new driving licenses. re traffic violations.

ICCP Dr Akbar Nasir Khan said that the purpose of all these actions was to ensure compliance with traffic laws, which resulted in a significant 12% reduction in accidents due to an increase in penalties for violations.

The Traffic Police officers diligently and professionally fulfilled their duties during the ongoing construction work at various locations including Bahria Chowk, Colonel Sher Khan Shaheed Road, Expressway, Rawal Dam Chowk Flyover, Golra Mor Underpass, Park Road, and Murree Road to ensure smooth flow of traffic.

ICCP further said that the ITP serves as a role model for other provinces due to its professional approach. "Islamabad witnesses a huge influx of vehicles daily, and maintaining traffic flow on roads while enforcing traffic laws is an extremely challenging task," he added.

NADRA smart ID card renewal updated fee Dec 2023

PNP

ISLAMABAD: The National Database & Registration Authority (NADRA) has updated the fee for the renewal of smart ID cards.

The NADRA smart card is a national identity card with the addition of a chip on the card which helps log information. It also secures your identity and other important records with an additional layer of biometric verification

The list of the fees for NADRA

Categories/Type	Service		
	Normal	Urgent	Executive
New Smart NIC	PKR 750	PKR 1500	PKR 2500
Smart NIC Modification	PKR 750	PKR 1500	PKR 2500
Smart NIC Duplicate	PKR 750	PKR 1500	PKR 2500
Smart NIC Renewal	PKR 750	PKR 1500	PKR 2500
CNIC Cancellation (Due to death)	PKR 50	-	-
CRC New/Duplicate/Modification	PKR 50	-	PKR 500
FRC	PKR 1000	-	PKR 1000

smart ID cards and others can be seen in table. Earlier, the National Database & Registration Authority (NADRA) launched the 'Pak ID Mobile App', bringing Identity services to the mobile

screens of the citizens.

Citizens can now process applications for their identity cards and documents by using the app. After completing the process through the app, the applicant could get their ID documents delivered to their doorstep, according to a press release on Thursday.

With the 'Pak ID mobile app', citizens can now apply for CNIC, and Family Registration Certificates without visiting NADRA offices, avoiding long queues and waiting times.

Foot and Mouth Disease in Pakistan

Aleeza Eman, Sadaf Shakil

Being an agricultural country, Pakistan largely rely on agricultural and farm products to generate revenue by exporting these products. Unfortunately, Pakistan is facing challenges in this sector as well. Talking about cattle farming and products attained from them, we are facing crisis in the form of various animal diseases and lack of resources to control them.

One of the prevailing veterinary diseases in Pakistan is Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD). It is a highly contagious viral infection that affects as cattle, sheep, goats, and pigs. It is a disease that has far-reaching consequences not only for animal health but also for the economy and food security.

If we talk about its prevalence, Punjab region is notorious for FMD as it is an active region in terms of animal trade, and its environment favors viral propagation.

From Islamabad, in a study conducted to check the prevalence of FMDV among buffaloes, 77.7% of 300 buffaloes were positive for anti-FMD antibodies. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, serum samples from 2,511 animals were collected and 9.83%



were positive for FMD. In another study conducted on sheep, mortality reported with FMD was 48.88%.

Higher number of outbreaks of the disease was noted between the months of January to March during this period, which may be attributed to the livestock movement in the country particularly due to religious festival, Eid ul Azha, in which the animals are sacrificed.

Livestock diseases are major source of production loss in Pakistan, with FMD having been identified as a major contributor through impacts on milk production, fertility, and animals being sold at a reduced value. In infected livestock, milk yields can drop by up to 50%, and meat quality suffers. During FMD outbreaks, countries may experience trade losses exceeding billions,

as seen in the UK's £8 billion (\$11 billion) loss in 2001. Governments spend heavily on vaccination and control measures, such as India's INR 8,000 crore (\$1.1 billion). Small-scale farmers lose livelihoods, and price increases affect consumer budgets. Moreover, FMD poses a global food security risk.

FMD spreads through various means, primarily through direct contact with infected animals or contaminated environments. It can be transmitted via respiratory secretions, saliva, milk, and even on fomites like equipment or vehicles. Infected animals become carriers, furthering the spread of the virus. This rapid transmission makes containing the disease challenging, especially in regions with dense livestock populations.

General symptoms include fever, sadness, hypersalivation, appetite loss, weight loss, growth retardation and blisters on the nose, tongue, or lips, inside the oral cavity, between the toes, above the hooves, on the teats, and at pressure points on the skin. Severe laziness and an unwillingness to move or feed might be caused by ruptured blisters. Blisters typically heal in 7 days, however

sometimes they take longer. Complications might also arise, such as secondary bacterial infections of open blisters.

FMD does not have a specific treatment. Antibiotic therapy can be utilized to manage secondary bacterial infections of ulcers; however, the healing process may need several weeks to months.

Following measures should be taken to prevent disease spread at farm level:

- ◆ Control over who has access to animals and equipment.
- ◆ Management of the addition of new animals to herds.
- ◆ Routine cleaning and disinfection of buildings, vehicles, and equipment used by livestock.
- ◆ Tracking and reporting of disease.
- ◆ Proper disposal of manure and dead corpses.

In addition to all these measures, vaccination of particular animals is also very helpful in the control of disease. To stop the virus from being introduced and spreading, producers and owners of cattle must generally follow good hygienic measures.

Writer is Students of Capital University of Science and Technology, Islamabad

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 Bureau Chief Lahore: **Syed Afraz Ali Nazish**
 (afrazalishah@gmail.com)
 Islamabad Office: Rose Plaza, I-8 Markaz.
 Karachi office: Flat No.C.3.A.One Comfort, Block No 11.
 Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Main Rashid Minhas Road.
 Lahore Office: 7-E,Samanberg, Johar Town.
 Email: **spokesmanislamabad@gmail.com**
 Whatsapp: **0346-5008408**

Atrocities in Occupied Kashmir and Propaganda against Pak Army - I

The Jammu and Kashmir region has long been a focal point of geopolitical tension between India and Pakistan, especially concerning the situation in Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. The concerns primarily revolve around allegations of human rights abuses. The dispute over Jammu and Kashmir traces back to the partition of British India in 1947, resulting in the creation of India and Pakistan. The accession of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir to India has been a contentious issue, leading to conflicts and three Indo-Pakistani wars. This territory remains a flashpoint, significantly affecting the lives of its inhabitants.

Human rights organizations and international observers have raised alarms about reported atrocities in Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detentions, torture, and restrictions on freedom of speech by India. Indian Security forces have been accused of excessive use of force, causing civilian casualties and displacement. The Armed Forces (Jammu and Kashmir) Special Powers Act, granting broad powers to Indian armed forces, has been a significant source of concern, contributing to a culture of impunity.

Communication blockades and internet shutdowns in Occupied Jammu & Kashmir have been frequent, impeding the flow of information, restricting freedom of expression, and making it chal-

lenging for the international community to assess the situation. Such restrictions are considered a violation of basic human rights in the modern age.

The international community has expressed varying degrees of concern. Human rights organizations, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, have called for independent investigations into alleged abuses. India contends that the situation is an internal matter and emphasizes its sovereign right to address security challenges, citing the need to counter terrorism and insurgency. However, critics argue that India is using excessive force to suppress the voice of Kashmiris, contrary to its claims.

The situation worsened after the abrogation of Article 370 on August 5, 2019. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, the Indian government rescinded the special autonomous status granted to Jammu and Kashmir, triggering extensive debates and discussions. Article 370, which provided special status to Jammu and Kashmir, was viewed as a means to honor the region's cultural, religious, and political diversity. The abrogation was presented as a step towards integration, but it faced opposition within India and globally, seen as a violation of the region's distinctive identity.

The Supreme Court of India later affirmed the decision to abrogate Article 370, dismissing petitions advocating for the restoration of Jammu and Kashmir's special status. The court clarified that Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India and that Article 370 was temporary. The judgment upheld the government's decision, stating that the President has the authority to abrogate any constitutional provision.

While Israel engages in the killing of Palestinians, another distressing situation unfolds in occupied Kashmir following a decision by the Modi government. Recently, the Indian Army apprehended over eight Kashmiris from their homes in the Bafliaz area of Poonch district. Subsequently, three of them, Safir Hussain, Muhammad Shaukat, and Shabbir Ahmed, were reported dead in a military camp. Ahmad Noor, the elder brother of one of the deceased, expressed his dismay, stating, "I served in the Indian Army for 32 years, and my loyalty has been repaid with my brother's death." Noor, disillusioned, emphasized that his decades of service and received awards now hold little value in his eyes.

Those injured in the military violence are currently undergoing treatment. One victim, speaking from the hospital,

revealed that he and others were subjected to inhumane treatment, including being stripped naked, beaten with sticks and iron rods, and having chili powder sprinkled on their wounds. Mohamad Ashraf, a 52-year-old resident of Hasbolt Thana Mandi in Rajouri district, recounted being part of a group arrested by Indian forces. He detailed the brutal treatment they endured, with a video circulating on social media capturing the harrowing incident.

Ashraf, a lineman in power development since 2007, supports his three children with a monthly salary of Rs 9330. His wife passed away earlier this year. Other victims admitted to Rajouri hospital include Farooq Ahmed (45), Fazl Hussain (50), Muhammad Betab (25), and a 15-year-old boy. Betab, married on December 15th, found his Walima ceremony transformed into a nightmare due to the brutality he endured.

The heinous incident has sparked intense protests in Srinagar. Internet services are completely shut down in Poonch district, and sieges and searches have been intensified. It's important to note that after five Indian soldiers were killed in an attack on December 21 in Poonch district of Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, the Indian Army appears to have unleashed a wave of inhumane atrocities on innocent citizens. The situation suggests that Indian occupation forces feel empowered to carry out mass atrocities against Kashmiris.

To be continued



Analysis

Abdul Basit Alvi

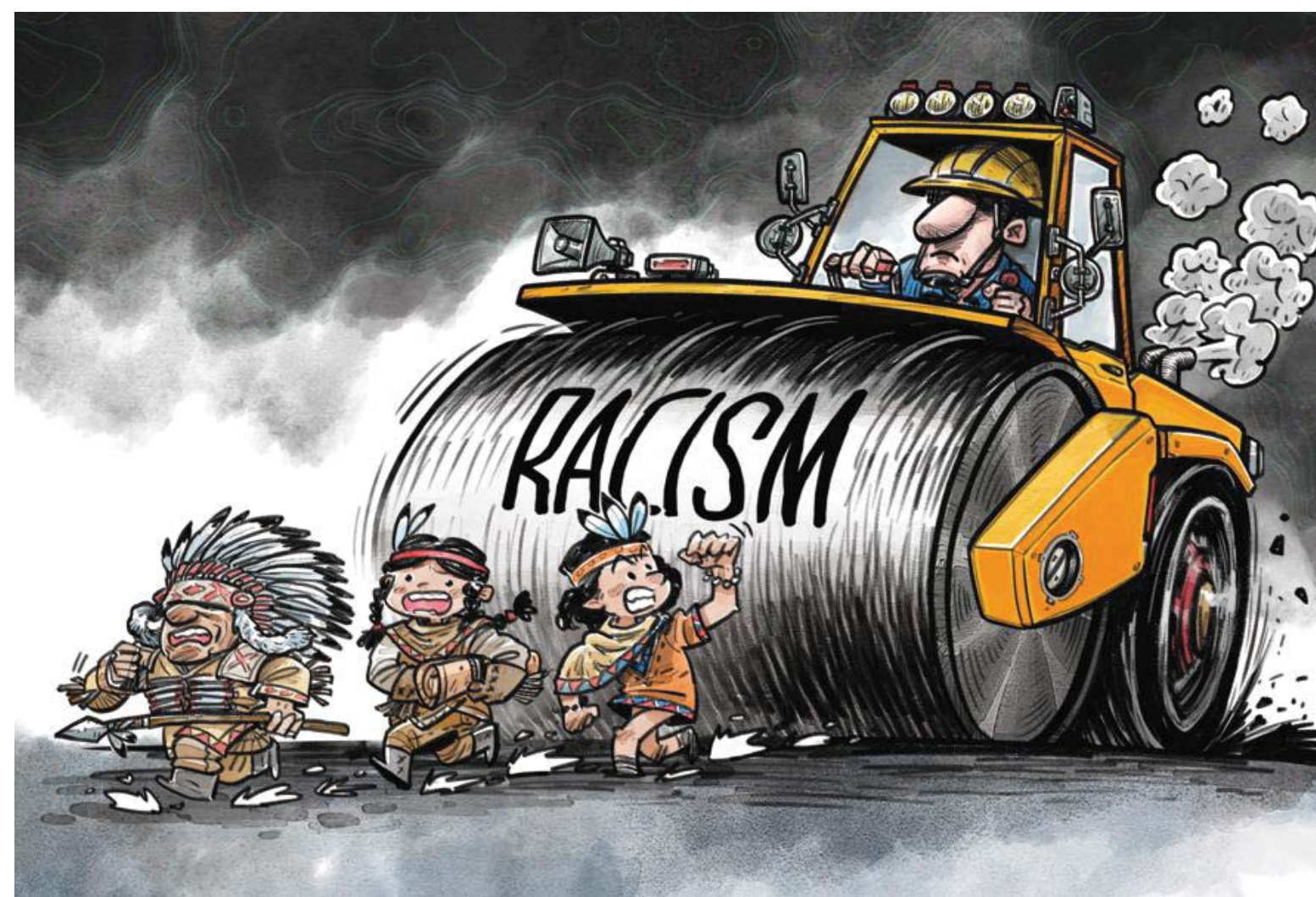
'Genocidal acts' in Gaza

South Africa has filed a case at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) accusing Israel of engaging in "genocidal acts" in Gaza, and asking the court to order the Israeli government to halt its attacks. In a press release, the Hague-based ICJ, which is UN's highest court, confirmed the application concerning alleged violations of Israel's obligations under the Genocide Convention.

Meanwhile, Israel has strongly rejected the allegation, calling it "baseless". Since a cross-border attack by Hamas on October 7, Israel's deadly bombardments of Gaza have left at least 21,000 people dead, three-quarters of them women and children, while thousands more are feared trapped under rubble, according to the enclave's health ministry.

The application filed "concerning alleged violations by Israel of its obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in relation to Palestinians in the Gaza Strip," the ICJ said in the press release. "Acts and omissions by Israel ... are genocidal in character, as they are committed with the requisite specific intent ... to destroy Palestinians in Gaza as a part of the broader Palestinian national, racial and ethnic group," read the statement. It added: "The conduct of Israel - through its State organs, State agents, and other persons and entities acting on its instructions or under its direction, control or influence - in relation to Palestinians in Gaza, is in violation of its obligations under the Genocide Convention," the statement added, citing the application. South Africa also accused Israel of "failing to prevent geno-

cide" and "prosecuting the direct and public incitement to genocide" in the application. "Israel has engaged in, is engaging in and risks further engaging in genocidal acts against the Palestinian people in Gaza," it added. South Africa also requested the ICJ to "indicate provisional measures in order to protect against further, severe and irreparable harm to the rights of the Palestinian people under the Genocide Convention and to ensure Israel's compliance with its obligations under the Genocide Convention not to engage in genocide, and to prevent and to punish genocide." The Israeli onslaught has left Gaza in ruins, with 60% of the enclave's infrastructure damaged or destroyed, and nearly 2 million residents displaced amid acute shortages of food, clean water, and medicines.



China 2024 - The Road Ahead

Promises, Challenges, and Global Influence

China's future in 2024 appears to be encouraging in numerous aspects. With its robust economy and continuous technological advancements, China is positioned to uphold its status as a global economic powerhouse. The country's stress on innovation and research and growth has led to advances in various fields, such as artificial intelligence, renewable energy, and biotechnology.

In terms of infrastructure development, China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) continues to expand, connecting countries and fostering economic cooperation. This initiative has the potential to enhance trade and strengthen diplomatic ties between China and its partner nations.

China is facing challenges with strength. Looking back at China's eventful year in 2023, it's important to recognize the country's ability to overcome difficulties. While headlines may focus on tough times, a closer look reveals a story of China adapting, staying determined, and using smart leadership to set the stage for a strong future.

President Xi Jinping is focused on keeping the country safe, especially with global changes happening. Some political actions, like removing certain officials, show how serious China is about staying stable even when facing challenges. It's important to see these decisions in a careful and detailed way.

The relationship between the United States and China had some tense moments. However, a successful meeting between President Xi and President Biden in November suggests a willingness to find

common ground. China's way of dealing with other countries shows a commitment to positive engagement.

China's journey in 2023 is a story of strength, adaptability, and facing challenges head-on. As China deals with a fast-changing world, recognizing its strengths and efforts is key to understanding where it's headed. The challenges aren't roadblocks but chances for China to grow, evolve, and build a better future.

In the grand theater of global economics, the spotlight has undeniably shifted towards the East, with China emerging as a key player in shaping the future world order. The recent trajectory of economic growth, coupled with strategic policy initiatives, positions China as a force to be reckoned with. As we navigate the evolving dynamics of the global economy, it is crucial to recognize the positive implications of China's rise.

The economic journey of China over the past few decades has been nothing short of remarkable. Goldman Sachs' projections for a further shift in global GDP towards Asia by 2050 underline the sustained momentum of the region. It's not just about outperformance; it's about rewriting the narrative of economic prowess.

As we project further into 2024, a new world order emerges. China stands shoulder to shoulder with similar GDPs, suggesting a balance of economic power. This parity opens doors for collaborative engagements that could redefine global cooperation. Moreover, the inclusion of Nigeria, Pakistan, and Egypt in the top 10 economies underscores the significance of rapid

population growth and the potential of a massive labor force.

The estimates also forecast a slip in rankings for European economies, with Germany, once a global economic powerhouse, projected to be ninth behind Brazil. This realignment signals a necessary adaptation to the changing tides of the global economy, where traditional power centers make room for emerging forces.

Amidst this transformative landscape, China's proactive steps in building a unified national market cannot be overlooked. The State Council's policy measures, focus on fundamental system improvement, and reforms in fiscal policies showcase a commitment to fostering a dynamic and integrated economic landscape. Dismantling barriers and addressing issues such as market segmentation and local protectionism are vital steps towards creating a more open and accessible market, not just for domestic enterprises but also for foreign businesses.

As we witness the rise of China and the broader Asian region, it is essential to recognize the potential for positive global impact. A balanced economic power play, coupled with strategic policies, can pave the way for collaborative and mutually beneficial engagements. The choices made by China in the coming years will undoubtedly shape the global landscape, and fostering an environment of cooperation and understanding should be at the forefront of these decisions.

[The writer, serves as Secretary General of the Pakistan-China Friendship Association's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chapter. With a passion for fostering international bonds, he also lends his expertise as a Senior Media Consultant based in Peshawar can be contacted through syeed.gilani@gmail.com.]



Analysis

Syed Ali Nawaz Gilani

PTI's Lawyers: A Seismic Shift...II

A government formed by a party coerced into fielding lawyers as candidates by military elites would inherently possess a strategic advantage in confronting the military's influence. Lawyers, through their legal training and experience, possess a nuanced understanding of legal frameworks, constitutional principles, and strategic thinking. This expertise equips them with the ability to foresee potential legal maneuvers by the military and devise counter strategies within legal boundaries. For instance, in navigating attempts to manipulate legislative processes or coerce the judiciary, lawyers-turned-politicians can leverage their legal acumen to expose such actions and rally support for upholding the rule of law. This strategic advantage, grounded in legal expertise, allows for more informed and calculated responses to the military's attempts at interference.

Even if PTI loses election and forms a lawyers-led opposition in the newly formed government post the February 8, 2024, general elections could significantly challenge military control in Pakistan. With their emphasis on legal expertise and commitment to accountability, lawyers might advocate for increased civilian oversight, reforms limiting military influence, and heightened transparency in defense affairs. This shift could strain civil-military relations, potentially leading to tensions and debates over the military's role in governance, defense policies, and international alliances, ultimately reshaping the power dynamics between the government and the military.

From the perspective of the all-powerful military elites seeking to preserve control over domestic and international affairs, permitting conventional politicians to participate in elections, rather than facilitating the ascension of lawyers to form the government, aligns strategically with their interests. Allowing conventional politicians to contest elections maintains an appearance of democratic legitimacy, reducing the likelihood of significant public or international outcry.

Moreover, these politicians are more open to controlled reforms that align with the military's interests, ensuring changes don't pose a threat to established power structures. This enables the military to control

the pace and direction of reforms, safeguarding their entrenched interests.

Additionally, a government led by conventional politicians offers maneuverability to military elites in international relations, critical for diplomatic ties, foreign investments, and maintaining a positive international image which aligns with the military's geopolitical and economic objectives, safeguarding their interests on the global stage. It can create an appearance of democratic legitimacy, allowing the military to maintain control without inciting significant resistance or outcry from the public or international community.

Ultimately, allowing conventional politicians to contest elections and potentially form the government aligns more closely with the military's interests in maintaining control, stability, and a familiar political landscape. It offers a strategic pathway to uphold influence over domestic affairs while presenting a more palatable image both domestically and internationally compared to the potential repercussions of coercing a lawyer-dominated government into power.

The entrance of lawyers into Pakistan's political mainstream poses an unprecedented challenge to the highly entrenched vested interests of the military elite. This seismic shift, marked by the ascent of legal minds in politics, threatens to disrupt the established power dynamics that have long been under the influence of traditional power brokers. The inadvertent consequence of sidelining conventional politicians in favor of lawyers has unleashed a force capable of reshaping governance, advocating for accountability, and challenging autocratic control. This transformation, driven by legal expertise and a commitment to justice, presents a formidable obstacle to the military's historically entrenched hold on political affairs. As lawyers increasingly assert their influence and advocate for democratic principles, transparency, and the rule of law, they pose a direct challenge to the military's dominance, potentially heralding a new era where legal intellect and public advocacy supersede the traditional stronghold of old-guard power structures.

Writer is Former Press Secretary to the President, Former Press Minister to the Embassy of Pakistan in France, Former MD, SRBC



Analysis

Qamar Bashir

Ring in 2024

Xi stresses advancing Chinese modernization, making world better place for all

Xinhua

BELJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping on Sunday urged efforts to steadfastly advance Chinese modernization, deliver a better life for the people, and strive to make the world a better place for all in the upcoming 2024.

Delivering his New Year message in his office in central Beijing, Xi summarized 2023 as a year when the country has marched forward with solid and robust steps, in high spirits and with great confidence.

"In 2023, we have continued to forge ahead with resolve and tenacity. We have gone through the test of winds and rains, have seen beautiful scenes unfolding on the way, and have made plenty real achievements. We will remember this year as one of hard work and perseverance. Going forward, we have full confidence in the future," he said in the nationally televised and livestreamed speech.

Xi said that in the past year, some enterprises had a tough time, some people had difficulty finding jobs and meeting basic needs, and some places were hit by floods, typhoons, earthquakes or other natural disasters.

"When I see people rising to the occasion, reaching out to each other in adversity, meeting challenges head-on and overcoming difficulties, I am deeply moved," he said.

The president lauded extraordinary contribution made by each and every ordinary Chinese and praised the people as the ones the country looks to when it fights to prevail over all difficulties or challenges.

"Our goal is both inspiring and simple. Ultimately, it is about delivering a better life for the people," he said.

CHINA IN 2023
Mentioning a smooth transition in COVID-19 response efforts first, Xi stressed that the Chinese economy has sustained the momentum of recovery.

Steady progress has been made in pursuing high-quality development, with modernized industrial system further upgraded, a number of advanced, smart and green industries rapidly emerging, a bumper harvest secured for the 20th year in a row, waters becoming clearer, mountains greener, and new advances made in



pursuing rural revitalization, according to the president.

He also noted that new progress has been made in fully revitalizing northeast China, the Xiong'an New Area is growing fast, the Yangtze River Economic Belt is full of vitality, and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area is embracing new development opportunities.

"Having weathered the storm, the Chinese economy is more resilient and dynamic than before," he said.

Xi highlighted the country's innovation-driven development, recalling that the C919 large passenger airliner entered commercial service, the Chinese-built large cruise ship completed its trial voyage, the Shenzhou space-ships are continuing their missions in space, and the deep-sea manned submersible Fendouzhe reached the deepest ocean trench.

He noted that products designed

and made in China, especially trendy brands, are highly popular with consumers and the latest models of Chinese-made mobile phones are an instant market success, while new energy vehicles, lithium batteries, and photovoltaic products are a new testimony to the country's manufacturing prowess.

Xi recalled the spectacular sports scenes and excellence of Chinese athletes at the Chengdu FISU World University Games and the Hangzhou Asian Games, the busy tourist destinations on holidays, the booming film market, and the immensely popular "village super league" football games and "village spring festival gala."

"All these exhilarating activities have made our lives richer and more colorful, and they mark the return of bustling life across the country. They embody people's pursuit of a beautiful life, and present a vibrant and flourishing China

to the world," he said.

The president said China is a great country with a great civilization, citing its time-honored history and splendid civilization.

"The mighty Yellow River and Yangtze River never fail to inspire us. Discoveries at the archeological sites of Liangzhu and Erlitou tell us much about the dawn of Chinese civilization. The ancient Chinese characters inscribed on oracle bones of the Yin Ruins, the cultural treasures of the Sanxingdui Site, and the collections of the National Archives of Publications and Culture bear witness to the evolution of Chinese culture," he said.

Noting that China fulfilled its responsibility as a major country in 2023, Xi said that the country held the China-Central Asia Summit and the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, and hosted leaders from across the world at many

diplomatic events.

"I also paid visits to a number of countries, attended international conferences, and met many friends, both old and new. I shared China's vision and enhanced common understandings with them," he said. "No matter how the global landscape may evolve, peace and development remain the underlying trend, and only cooperation for mutual benefit can deliver."

PROSPECT FOR 2024

Next year will mark the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, Xi said.

He called for efforts to steadfastly advance Chinese modernization, fully and faithfully apply the new development philosophy on all fronts, speed up building the new development paradigm, promote high-quality development, and both pursue development and safeguard security.

Acting on the principle of seeking

progress while maintaining stability, promoting stability through progress, and establishing the new before abolishing the old, the country will work to consolidate and strengthen the momentum of economic recovery, and achieve steady and long-term economic development, he said.

Xi stressed the needs to deepen reform and opening up across the board, further enhance people's confidence in development, promote vibrant development of the economy, and redouble efforts to boost education, advance science and technology and cultivate talents.

It is imperative to continue to support Hong Kong and Macao in harnessing their distinctive strengths, better integrating themselves into China's overall development, and securing long-term prosperity and stability, he said.

"China will surely be reunified, and all Chinese on both sides of the Taiwan Strait should be bound by a common sense of purpose and share in the glory of the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation," he said.

Xi stressed that our ultimate goal is to deliver a better life for the people.

Children in China should be well taken care of and receive good education and young people should have the opportunities to pursue their careers and succeed, while elderly people should have adequate access to medical services and elderly care, he said.

"These issues matter to every family, and they are also a top priority of the government. We must work together to deliver on these issues," he said.

He also said that the country should foster a warm and harmonious atmosphere in the society, expand the inclusive and dynamic environment for innovation, and create convenient and good living conditions, so that the people can live happy lives, bring out their best, and realize their dreams.

Drawing attention to the conflicts still raging in some parts of the world, Xi said Chinese are keenly aware of what peace means and will work closely with the international community for the common good of humanity, build a community with a shared future for mankind, and make the world a better place for all.

Azerbaijan Army holds events to mark Solidarity Day and New Year

Spokesman Report

According to the plan approved by the Minister of Defense, Colonel General Zakir Hasanov, a number of events on the occasion of 31 December – the Day of Solidarity of World Azerbaijanis and New Year were held in all types of troops, Combined Arms Army, Army Corps, formations and special educational institutions of the Azerbaijan Army, Azernews reports citing the Defense Ministry.

First, the memory of the Nation-

al Leader of the Azerbaijani people Heydar Aliyev, and Shehids (Martyrs) who sacrificed their lives for the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan was honoured with observing a minute of silence. The National Anthem of the Republic of Azerbaijan accompanied by a military orchestra was performed.

Speakers at festive events spoke about the history of Solidarity Day, its significance, the invaluable merits of the National Leader Heydar Aliyev, who laid a solid foundation for the development of our republic, the

victory won in the Patriotic War and other successful combat operations under the leadership of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces Mr. Ilham Aliyev, who is a worthy successor of the National Leader's policy, as well as about ensuring progress in all spheres.

The events include documentaries, videos, photo and book exhibitions for military personnel, meetings with personnel, cultural-mass, patriotic events with the participation of

local executive authorities, state and non-governmental organizations, veterans, public representatives.

According to the instruction of the Defense Minister, orphanages were also visited by military personnel, festive tables were laid, children were presented with various gifts and an entertaining program.

At the events, the creative teams of the Army Ideological and Cultural Center named after Hazi Aslanov, and the Ganja Garrison Ideological and Cultural Center, as well as regional



cultural departments performed interesting concert programs.

From economic turmoil to Nawaz's return, a tumultuous 2023 for Pakistan

Ali Abbas

The year 2023 draws to a close, with Pakistan witnessing significant developments that will change the course of South Asian nation in times to come.

It saw uncertainty in Pakistan attributable to economic turmoil and volatile politics. Pakistan's institutional imbalance was transpicuous, specifically in the case of date for general elections – a matter that settled after the Supreme Court acted as 'forcing factor'.

As the country heads into 2024, we have gathered some developments that not only shaped headlines during the year 2023, but impacted Pakistan's situation.

Economic Turmoil
Pakistan's resilient economy was stuck, once again, between a rock and a hard place. The high political drama and global geopolitical crisis brought it to a crossroads.

During this year, the Pakistani rupee hit an all-time low, crossing the 300-mark against the US dollar in August. Moreover, the foreign exchange reserves held by State Bank of Pakistan (SPB) also dropped to an alarming



level – at \$3.1 billion in January 2023.

The country also struggled to unlock the crucial funding from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and, in this regard, took similarly criticised steps.

The SBP hiked interest rate by 300bps to 22 per cent – the highest level since October 1996, while the government introduces taxes on gas and electricity. Pakistan Consumer Price Index (CPI) growth reached an all-time high of 38pc in May.

After such adversity, Pakistan finally secured staff-level agreement with the IMF for a \$3 billion "nine-month Stand-

by Arrangement (SBA)". The executive board of the IMF will finally meet on January 11, 2024, to consider the final approval to hand out the next \$700 million tranche.

May 9 – "dark chapter"
The most politically significant development of the outgoing year was the events that unfolded from May 9 to May 11 – which Pakistan's military described as a "dark chapter". The series of events were part of the irrevocable breakdown of Imran Khan's relations with the military establishment.

On May 9, the country saw the arrest of "popular" leader

and PTI founder Imran Khan – who was accused of corruption, unlawfully selling gifts from foreign dignitaries and leaking state secrets.

When violent protests broke out over Imran Khan's arrest, PTI supporters attacked and vandalised military installations and government buildings, prominently the GHQ and the Lahore corps commander's official residence.

Even the memorials of martyrs were not spared. The country never witnessed such fury against the state institution – which shaken the state to its core.

Later in August, Imran Khan

was re-arrested after Islamabad High Court convicted him in a corruption case that held him guilty of illegally selling state gifts. The conviction banned PTI founder from contesting elections and holding public office for five years.

Over a hundred other cases were registered against him. A sweeping crackdown saw arrests of PTI leaders and activists while some were coerced into abandoning the party.

The unfortunate Jaranwala
This year, Pakistan once again witnessed another disturbing episode of anti-Christian violence over "unproven" blasphemy allegations, when a large crowd unleashed chaos in Jaranwala on August 16.

A violent mob of hundreds vandalised and burned down 19 churches and dozens of Christian homes in the city's various neighbourhoods and attacked the office of the local assistant commissioner.

The cause of the outbreak of violent events was accusations of blasphemy triggered by the discovery of desecrated Quran pages near the home of two Christian brothers.

Video clips and photos shared on social media showed flames and smoke billowing from some

church buildings, people setting fire to furniture and removing the symbol of the crucifix from a church building.

The mob rampage targeting Christians in Jaranwala should serve as a critical opportunity for the nation to look inwards, honestly diagnose the disease, and remove the extremism from society.

Nawaz Sharif's return
This year, the nation witnessed a return that they all were waiting for – three-time premier and PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif. The former prime minister ended a four-year self-imposed exile to lead his party in the general elections.

At the homecoming rally in Lahore, Nawaz said he has "no wish for revenge" and stressed on beginning a "new journey" towards growth.

Nawaz Sharif has once again pulled off a political resurrection after seemingly being written off from politics for the second time. Just like he did in 1999, when Gen Pervez Musharraf sent him packing to Saudi Arabia.

The PML-N is again gearing up to contest the 2024 elections from the Manshera region of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and would also contest from Lahore. Surge in terrorist attacks

Terrorism has been the principal threat to the people of Pakistan, with this year at least 271 militant attacks took place during the first half of 2023, resulting in the loss of 389 lives and injuring 656 individuals.

The numbers were revealed by an independent think tank Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS).

Since the Taliban takeover of Kabul in 2021, there has been a 73 per cent increase in terrorist incidents in Pakistan as compared to the corresponding period preceding the Taliban's seizure of power.

Militant attacks in Pakistan surged since 2022 when a ceasefire broke down between the government and the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). The banned outfit continues to have space in Afghanistan to plan and carry out attacks in Pakistan.

The suicide attack on a Rabi-ul Awwal congregation in the Balochistan town left almost 60 people dead. At least five people were killed in a targeted attack in KP on the same day, swelling the number of fatalities.

The return of terrorism presents a most serious challenge to a nation mired in multiple crises.

Punjab 'faces' electricity, gas shortage

PPA

LAHORE: Different parts of Punjab including the provincial capital of Lahore, are facing electricity and gas shortages, ARY News reported, citing sources Sunday.

According to sources, due to a shortfall in demand and supply of electricity, the load shedding tenure has increased up to three hours in urban cities and 6 hours in the rural areas of Punjab.

The shortfall has occurred as the government reportedly failed to reopen the closed power plants.

Meanwhile, the gas shortage has also added to the misery of Punjab's people. The people are facing it hard to get the gas even at the three times of cooking, the sources said.

Earlier this week, Sui Northern Gas Company (SNGC) added fix charges to the November bills of the consumers after approval from the caretaker government.

According to officials, protected consumers using 0.9 hectometer gas will pay Rs400 as fixed monthly charges, while non-protected users consuming up to 1.5 hecta meters will be charged an additional Rs1,000 in their bills.

Officials say consumers whose usage of gas is ZERO will also pay Rs400/monthly fixed charges.

RTO Rawalpindi collects Rs. 21 billion in December; achieves target: Tehmina



ISLAMABAD: Regional Tax Office (RTO), Rawalpindi, by collecting Rs. 21 billion tax in December 2023 has achieved its revenue target set for this month, said Chief

Commissioner Tehmina Amir in a statement issued here on Sunday. She further said that the RTO Rawalpindi has also realised its quarterly (October-December) revenue collection target.

Govt keeps petrol prices unchanged



ISLAMABAD: The government on Sunday decided to keep the prices of petroleum products unchanged for next fortnight, finance ministry said in a statement issued

here. "The government has decided to maintain the current prices of Petrol and High Speed Diesel (HSD) during the fortnight starting from 1st January, 2024, as recommended by Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA)," it said.

Accordingly, petrol would be available at current rate i.e. Rs.267.34 per liter whereas HSD would be sold at Rs.276.21 per liter.

Swiss financial watchdog wants to examine clawing back bankers' bonuses



ZURICH: Switzerland's financial regulator wants to discuss the ability to claw back bonuses from bankers as part of stronger powers following the fall of Credit Suisse and sale to UBS.

"The question is on the table and must be discussed now," FINMA Chairwoman Marlene Amstad told newspaper Schweiz am Wochenende, when asked about the right to demand bonuses be repaid.

"The Credit Suisse case shows that for decades the bank has incurred losses and at the same time paid out high bonuses," she said in the interview on Saturday.

"We therefore need a better legal basis so that FINMA can intervene earlier and more systematically."

FINMA has already demanded stronger powers to oversee lenders in future after it came under fire for its tepid response to the mounting problems at Credit Suisse before the bank's crash in March. The regulator has previously said it wanted the ability to issue fines, publish details of enforcement proceedings, and increase accountability by establishing a set of rules that identify specific responsibilities for senior executives—mirroring a framework adopted in Britain. FINMA cannot currently exercise these powers, with the decision on whether to grant them in future a matter for the Swiss parliament, said Amstad, who has led the watchdog since 2021.

Pakistan earned over \$892m from IT services' export in 4 months: PBS

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan earned US \$892.972 million by providing different Information Technology (IT) services to various countries during the first four months of the current fiscal year 2023-24.

This shows a growth of 4.45 per cent as compared with the US \$854.918 million earned through the provision of services during the corresponding months of the last fiscal year 2022-23, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

During the months under review, the export of computer services grew by 4.81 per cent as it surged from US \$688.078 million last year to US \$721.162 million during July-October 2023.

Among the computer services, the exports of software consultancy services witnessed an increase of 93.76 per cent, from US \$1.009 million to US \$1.955 million this year while the export of hardware consul-



tancy services also surged by 1.13 per cent, from US \$253.543 million to US \$256.408 million.

The export of repair and maintenance services increased by 3.16 per cent from US

\$0.443 million to US \$0.457 million whereas the export and imports of computer software services also surged by 4.01 per cent, from \$190.228 million to \$197.862 million.

Meanwhile, the export of information

services during the months under review dipped by 25.18 per cent from US \$1.390 million to US \$1.040 million.

Among the information services, the exports of information-related services increased by 21.04 per cent, from US \$0.366 million to US \$0.443 million whereas the exports of news agency services however decreased by 41.70 per cent, from US \$1.024 million to US \$0.597 million.

The export of telecommunication services increased by 4.45 per cent as these went up from US \$165.45 million to US \$170.770 million, the data revealed.

Among the telecommunication services, the export of call centres services increased by 8.84 per cent during the months as its exports increased from US \$69.641 million to US \$75.800 million whereas the export of other telecommunication services witnessed a nominal decrease of 0.88 per cent, from US \$95.809 million to US \$94.790 million during this year, the PBS data revealed.

Warm clothes

LAHORE: People are busy in buying warm clothes outside Impress Market during cold weather in Provincial Capital.



Photo: Online

71% of power network remained loadshedding-free: KE

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: The K-Electric spokesperson said Sunday that 71% of power network remained loadshedding-free, while the remaining 29% experiences loadshedding in proportion to the area's loss profile with a maximum duration of 10 hours in a day.

The KE spokesperson said in a statement, "Loadshedding regime for KE's service territory has experienced no significant change following a routine review



of the company's network of over 2,000 feeders."

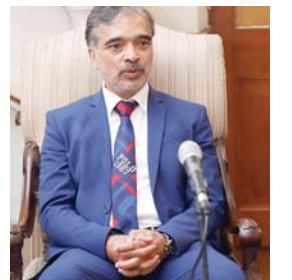
"The last review was conducted in September 2023. The latest schedule is published on the company's website and is effective from January 01, 2024. Customers can also check for their latest updates via the KE Live App and KE WhatsApp service."

PIAF hopes for firm economy, promotion of trade & industry in 2024

PPA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Industrial & Traders Associations Front (PIAF) has said that the role of the business community is vital for the economic uplift and stability of the country, as the businessmen are the backbone of the economy and a leading contributor to the economic progress and prosperity of the country.

In a New Year message issued here today, the PIAF Chairman Faheemur Rehman Saigol, expressing the hope and good wishes for the upcoming year 2024, prayed for the strengthening of the country's economy and promotion of trade and industry, which has been the motto and priority of the PIAF. He said that the present caretaker government has steered the country's economy out of the crisis by making sincere efforts. He said that PIAF would continue to utilize its best abilities to bring closer the various besides to promote trade and industry. He said that the country's economy was showing the signs of stability which bodes well for the



development and prosperity of the country.

The PIAF Chairman pointed out the problems faced by the business community along with suggestions for their solution. He appreciated the role being played by the private sector, particularly the PIAF, in the country's economic development. He said at present, tough economic conditions called for taking difficult decisions but the government should have been committed to improve the economy. He also stressed the need for technical education's close linkage with the industry. He said the government should give great importance to the business community and continue to support them by resolving their problems on top priority.

APBF for new policies, reforms to promote Ease of Doing Business in 2024

PPA

ISLAMABAD: The All Pakistan Business Forum has stressed the need for new policies and widespread structural reforms in the upcoming year of 2024 to help investors launch their ventures with ease and comfort, as the country has been lagging behind in the ease of doing business index over the years and especially in the concluding year of 2023.

The APBF President Syed Maaz Mahmood, in a new year message released to media today, observed that a policy should be finalized after incorporating inputs from real stakeholders of the business community, including the APBF, with the sole aim of facilitating foreign and domestic investment by removing the unnecessary bureaucratic and administrative hurdles that slow down the process of starting new business ventures and hinder



economic growth.

Quoting the figures, he stated that in the recent Ease of Doing Business Index, Pakistan is considerably behind peer economies, ranking 108 out of 190. In the regulatory area of Starting a Business, Pakistan ranked 72 out of 190 countries. The scope of the

new policy intervention in 2024 should be limited to NOCs required by federal regulatory agencies for incorporation and starting operations of a business activity. This policy should cover business registration and authorization required for business operations. The policy should be applicable on all public sector entities of the federal and provincial governments that regulate businesses.

The World Bank Group's Doing Business project provides a measure of the "Ease of Doing Business" through a set of objective indicators that focus on the impacts of laws, regulations and their enforcement across 190 economies.

The government claimed that it has consistently been making efforts to improve business environment in the country. In previous years, almost 300 reforms have been implemented to improve investment climate in the country, it added.

BMP for policies revisit, as economic indicators remain depressed throughout 2023

PNP

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) has stressed the need for a revisit of the economic policies, as the economic indicators throughout the 2023 remained very depressed amidst high inflation, low exports, depleting foreign reserves and continued uncertain position of the local currency.

FPCCI former president and BMP Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar said that almost all indicators of the economy continued to show poor performance during 2023, including volatile exchange rate, unprecedented hike in markup rate, repeated



increases in electricity rates, gas shortage, price spiral, mismanagement and bad governance, becoming the hallmarks of the govt.

He observed the negative economic indicators and uncertainty over resumption of the International Monetary Fund program continued to push the

rupee towards a new historic low against the US dollar especially in first half of the calendar year of 2023. He said that massive fall of rupee value continued to damage the economy, as the rupee witnessed a huge depreciation; one of the highest devaluations of local currency in Pakistan's history in this period.

Economy caught in low growth trap with poor performance in 2023: FRIA

PNP

LAHORE: The Ferozepur Road Industrial Association Lahore (FRIA) senior vice chairman Shahbaz Aslam has said that the economy throughout the 2023 continued to stuck in low growth trap, as economic conditions leave Pakistan highly vulnerable to climate shocks with insufficient public resources to finance development. Shahbaz Aslam, who is the prominent business leader, while referring to the data of concluding year 2023 and media reports, suggested the domestic debt re-profiling did not always work unless associated with sharp and sustained structural reforms

FBR serves notices to over 8mln tax non-filers

Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has served notices to over 8mln tax non-filers in a move to tighten noose around defaulters, ARY News reported, quoting officials of the tax collection body.

The notices were served to people under the Income Tax General Order. As per details, a total of 8.19mln notices have been served to tax non-filers including over 2.4 mln notices for the year 2022 and over 5.6 mln notices for the year 2023.

The FBR said the nation will be initiated against people who fail to respond to the notices. Telephone connections of the non-registered people will be disconnected in the second phase. Caretaker Prime Minister



(PM) Anwaarul Haq Kakar had stressed the importance of revenue and increasing the existing number of tax filers during recent meetings. The FBR board notified the establishment of district tax offices, a new initiative that will help broaden the tax base and ultimately raise the tax-to-GDP ratio to a desired level.

The offices would be headed by District Tax Officers entrusted with the responsibility of enforcing Income Tax Returns from non-filers and stop-filers, according to a press release.

Junaid Khan named as Pakistan U19 team's bowling coach

Sports Desk

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Sunday appointed the former left-arm pacer Junaid Khan as the Pakistan U19 team's bowling coach.

The decision came following the unavailability of bowling coach Rehan Riaz, who has opted out of the ICC U19 World Cup 2024 due to a family emergency.

Junaid Khan, who previously served as the head coach of Islamabad Region, led the team to victory in the Hanif Mohammad Trophy 2023-24 recently.

The 34-year-old Junaid Khan has represented Pakistan in 22 Test matches since his debut in 2011, picking 71 wickets at an average of 31.73.

He also picked 110 wickets in 76 ODI matches at 29.23 from 2011 to 2019, while in T20I cricket he picked eight wickets in nine games.

Junaid Khan was also part of the 2017 ICC Champions Trophy-winning squad where Pakistan triumphed over India in the final.



The ICC U19 Men's Cricket World Cup 2024 will commence on January 19, 2024, in South Africa, while the final is scheduled to be played on February 11, 2024.

Five venues across South Africa will host a total of 41 ICC U19 Men's Cricket

World Cup matches. The 15th edition of the showpiece event will feature 16 teams, divided into four groups.

Group A features defending champions India alongside Bangladesh, Ireland and the United States of America (USA), while Group B consists of England, South Africa, West Indies, and Scotland.

Two-time champions Pakistan are placed in Group D alongside Afghanistan, New Zealand and Nepal while Australia, Sri Lanka, Namibia and Zimbabwe were placed in Group C.

The top three sides from each group progress to the Super Six phase of the event.

The top four teams at the conclusion of the Super Six stage will then advance to the semi-finals, scheduled on February 6 and 8.

Meanwhile, the final of the ICC U19 Men's Cricket World Cup will take place on February 11 in Benoni.

South Africa will host the U19 World Cup for the third time, having previously hosted the 1998 and 2020 editions.

Notably, the International Cricket Council (ICC) awarded the hosting rights of the mega event to South Africa as a consequence of the apex cricket body's provisional ban on Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC).

Aqeel, Sarah emerge victorious in 8th Serena Hotels Tennis C'ships

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: Aqeel Khan continued his dominance at the national level as he clinched men's singles title of the 8th Serena Hotels National Ranking Tennis Championships 2023 by beating promising Muhammad Shoaib in the final at the PTF-SDA Tennis Complex, Islamabad on Sunday.



Aqeel won the first set 6-3, but Shoaib showed his class as Aqeel conceded the second set 1-6. However, Aqeel bounced back to take the third set 6-2 to win the title.

Meanwhile, in the ladies' singles final, Sarah Mahboob Khan overpowered Meheq Khokhar 6-3, 6-2 to annex the title. Elsewhere, in the boys' single 14 under final, Amir Mazari defeated Abdul Basit in a seesaw battle 7-5, 5-7, 7-5 to lift the title.

GTR Tyre Presents Kaliwali Zalmi Cricket League season 3 final



Sports Desk

LAHORE: Khyber Tigers won the season 3 of Kaliwal Zalmi Cricket League. In the final played in Kabal Ground Swat, Khyber Tigers beat Bannu Bulls in the final in present of large crowd.

Arshad Khan Education Secretary KPK, Head of Marketing GTR Tyres, Asad Usmani, PCB Level 3 Coach, Jamal and other local government officials grace the closing ceremony.

Record 800 teams and over 12,000 Cricketers were in action during GTR presents Kaiwal Zalmi League held in cities, villages, and fields of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Chairman of Peshawar Zalmi Javed Afridi said that he is thankful to the young cricketers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for the wonderful response of the Kaleval Zalmi League. We will continue to organize healthy activities for the youth in the future as well.

CEO GTR Tyres Hussain Kuli Khan said that GTR believes in organizing sports and healthy activities for the youth in Pakistan. Kaliwal Zalmi League is close to my heart and Peshawar Zalmi and GTR will continue to organize such events together in future for the youth of KP & Pakistan.

Peshawar Zalmi, Zalmi Foundation and Paigham e Pakistan combine collaboration event emerged as the popular cricket festival of the province. The teams of Bannu Bulls, Khyber Tigers, Swat Hawks, Bara Titans, Kohat Knights, Hazara Panthers, Charsadda Eagles and DI Khan Stallions were made it to the final stage of the League.

UAE edge Afghanistan in second T20I

Nabi's blitz in vain as UAE edge Afghanistan in second T20I

A Sports

SHARJAH: Mohammad Nabi's blistering 47 went in vain as the United Arab Emirates (UAE) edged Afghanistan by 11 runs in the second T20I here on Sunday.



The host team's bowlers Muhammad Jawadullah and Ali Naseer bowled Afghanistan for 155 in pursuit of 167 to register an 11-run victory and level the series 1-1.

UAE got off to a flying start after opting to bat first as their captain Muhammad Waseem and Aryan Lakra raised a brilliant 72-run opening stand.

Qais Ahmed put the brakes on their progress with the wicket of Waseem, who departed after a quick innings of 53 runs from 32 balls, featuring four boundaries and three sixes.

Afghanistan bowlers capitalized after the first wicket as UAE slipped from 72-1 to 127-7, with Lakra standing firm amidst falling wickets on the other end.

Akif Raja joined Lakra at the fall of the seventh wicket in the 17th over and together they added 39 runs from 19 balls to push UAE's total to 166-7 in their allotted 20 overs.

Aryan Lakra scored an unbeaten 63 off 47, with the help of three boundaries and four sixes, while Akif Raja scored 13 off 11 with two boundaries.

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Qais Ahmed and Azmatullah Omarzai picked two wickets for Afghanistan, while Fazaalhaq Farooqi and Mohammad Nabi grabbed one scalp each.

In response, Hazratullah Zazai and Rahmanullah Gurbaz laid the foundation for Afghanistan with a 47-run opening stand which was broken by Ali Naseer in the sixth over.

Gurbaz was the first man to depart after an anchoring 21 off 17. Afghanistan skipper Ibrahim Zadran (4) became the second victim of Naseer in the next over with 63 runs on the board.

Group photo

Karachi: Group Photo With Jamil Ahmed President RCAA Zone 2 On the occasion of the registration of Larosh Cricket Club RCAA Zone 2, also lunch given by Larosh to the players and officials at Rashid Latif Cricket Academy Gulberg. President Larosh CC Saeed Ali, President Bob Woolmer CC Shahid Nawab, Secretary Larosh CC Muhammad Nizam, Convener Fariduddin and Nasir Khan Kaka also seen in the picture.



Third round of President's Trophy Grade-I 2023-24

Sports Desk

The third round of President's Trophy Grade-I 2023-24 came to an end with Ghani Glass beating Pakistan Television (PTV), while Khan Research Laboratories (KRL) registered their second win of the tournament as they beat Higher Education Commission (HEC).

Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL), led by Asad Shafiq, also won their second game as they got over the line against State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

After the completion of three rounds, KRL's Abdul Faseeh sits at the top of the leading run scorers chart with 416 runs while Ghani Glass' Mohammad Rameez Jnr is the leading wicket-taker with total of 18 scalps to his name.

Ghani Glass vs PTV at National Bank Stadium, Karachi

Ghani Glass knocked off the remaining 95 runs on day four, winning the game by seven wickets, against PTV to register their first win in the tournament.

Sharjeel Khan (109, 120b, 13x4s, 3x6s) struck his 14th first-class ton to secure the game for his team.

Continuing from their overnight score of 124-1, Ghani Glass lost centurion Sharjeel Khan but Tayyab Tahir (50 not out, 109b, 3x4s, 1x6) and skipper Saad Nasim (21 not out, 11b, 2x4s, 1x6) took the team home with an unbeaten 35-run partnership.

Mohammad Sadaqat, who had plucked a wicket late on day three managed to

remove Sharjeel as well. Mohammad Junaid picked up one wicket too. PTV, yet to get off the mark, will face HEC in the fifth round while Ghani Glass will lock horns with HEC in the fourth round.

KRL vs HEC at UBL Sports Complex, Karachi

KRL raced to a 120-run win against HEC on day four as they picked up the remaining nine wickets in 51 overs.

HEC continued from their overnight score of 117-1, in pursuit of 434, but soon lost their set batters, Mohammad Huraira (67, 68b, 10x4s) and Saad Khan (68, 111b, 11x4s), with the scorecard reading 162-3.

First innings centurion, Awais Zafar, fell for a paltry 12 off 19 balls. Wicketkeeper batter Ghazi Ghouri (48, 66b, 5x4s) put up some resistance but was dismissed by Sharoon Siraj. KRL dismissed HEC for 313 to register their second win of the tournament.

Rohan Qadri bagged four wickets while Sharoon Siraj, Sirajuddin and Arshadullah chipped in with two wickets each. KRL will face SNGPL in the next assignment.

SNGPL vs SBP at State Bank Stadium, Karachi

SNGPL chased the target of 123 runs against SBP with six wickets in the bag on day four of the match. Their overnight score of 15-2 soon became 55-4 as they lost Abdul Samad (26, 63b, 4x4s) and Mohammad Ali (14, 42b, 2x4s).

Experienced duo fo Asad Shafiq (47 not out, 71b, 6x4s, 1x6) and Azhar Ali (23, 66b,

2x4s) stitched an unbeaten 72-run partnership to bring momentum tomuch the innings.

Mohammad Abbas and Mohammad Ilyas returned with two wickets. SNGPL have now registered two wins out of their three games in the tournament while SBP have one win out of two games.

SBP's Mohammad Abbas is the joint-second leading wicket-taker in the tournament with 12 scalps in two games.

They will face Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) in the next round.

Scores in brief: Ghani Glass beat PTV by seven wickets at National Bank Stadium

Ghani Glass 319-9, 80 overs (Saad Nasim 150, Hussain Talat 49, Shahbaz Javed 45; Mohammad Sadaqat 3-72, Adil Naz 2-52, Uzair Mumtaz 1-20, Hasan Mohsin 1-43, Israr Hussain 1-60, Mohammad Junaid 1-70) and 219-3, 50.1 overs (Sharjeel Khan 109, Tayyab Tahir 50 not out, Mohsin Riaz 28; Mohammad Sadaqat 2-73, Mohammad Junaid 1-48)

PTV 128 all out, 36.2 overs (Iaimur Khan 50, Mohammad Suleman 28; Mohammad Rameez Jnr 4-25, Shoaib Akhtar 4-37, Niaz Khan 1-13, Musa Khan 1-33) and f/o 409 all out, 96.4 overs (Iaimur Khan 160, Mohammad Suleman 106; Mohammad Rameez Jnr 5-146, Shoaib Akhtar 3-75, Saeed Ali 2-33)

KRL beat HEC by 120 runs at UBL Sports

Complex

KRL 411-7, 80 overs (Abdul Faseeh 153, Sharoon Siraj 64, Waqar Ahmed 60, Maaz Sadaqat 46; Mohammad Azab 3-103, Waseem Akram 1-72, Mohammad Junaid 1-92) and 401-9 dec, 79 overs (Abdul Faseeh 156, Sharoon Siraj 65, Maaz Sadaqat 53 not out; Aadel Meo 2-35, Waseem Akram 2-42, Jahanzaib Sultan 2-92)

HEC 379-8, 80 overs (Awais Zafar 111, Saad Khan 67, Ghazi Ghouri 56; Arshadullah 4-77, Sharoon Siraj 1-52) and 313 all out, 73.2 overs (Saad Khan 68, Mohammad Huraira 67, Ghazi Ghouri 48; Rohan Qadri 4-46, Sharoon Siraj 2-51, Arshadullah 2-84, Sirajuddin 2-86.)

SNGPL beat SBP by six wickets at State Bank Stadium

SBP 170 all out, 59.1 overs (Umar Amin 48, Zain Abbas 36, Muhammad Irfan Khan 32; Shahnawaz Dahani 6-40, Mohammad Awais Anwar 2-33, Bilawal Bhatti 1-29, Mohammad Ali 1-52) and 257 all out, 89.4 overs (Rameez Aziz 80, Muhammad Irfan Khan 75; Mohammad Awais Anwar 3-29, Mohammad Ali 2-49, Shahnawaz Dahani 2-73)

SNGPL 305-8, 80 overs (Mubasir Khan 84 not out, Asad Shafiq 77, Bilawal Bhatti 54; Mohammad Ilyas 4-77, Kashif Bhatti 2-64, Sameen Gul 2-69) and 127-4, 46 overs (Asad Shafiq 47*, Abdul Samad 26, Azhar Ali 23 not out; Mohammad Abbas 2-32, Mohammad Ilyas 2-39)

Andy Murray reveals 2024 could be his last on Tour

Sports Desk

LAHORE: Two-time Wimbledon champion Andy Murray said 2024 could be his final year before retirement after illness and injury hampered his preparation for the new season.

Murray's year will begin at the Brisbane International as he builds up for the Australian Open later in January.

The 36-year-old is ranked 42nd in the world after a frustrating end to 2023 when he won just one match in his last four tournaments.

Andy Murray has seemingly battled back from what seemed impending retirement after undergoing hip surgery in 2018.

But he conceded that he will bring down the curtain on his career if the next 12 months follow the same pattern as 2023.

"If I was in a situation like I was at the end of last year, then I probably wouldn't go again," Murray told the BBC.

"But then if physically I'm doing well and my results are good and I'm playing well, then that's enjoyable and I could see myself still playing."

"We'll see how the year goes, see how the body holds up. If things are going well, I'd love to keep going. But if they're not, and I'm not enjoying it, it could be the last year, yes."

Andy Murray, who won Wimbledon in 2013 and 2016 and also took the US Open title in 2012, is part of a golden generation coming towards the end of trophy-laden careers.

Roger Federer retired in 2022 and Rafael Nadal had an injury-blighted 2023, although the Spaniard has suggested he might try to play on beyond 2024.

At 36, Novak Djokovic is still hoping to add to his record 24 Grand Slam titles before hanging up his racket.

Murray revealed the psychological struggle with falling down the rankings after so many years at the top was taking its toll.

"When you have played right at the highest level, it's not that easy when you are going through periods where you are losing in first rounds, and maybe losing matches that you probably should have won," he added.

"At the same time, a couple of years ago if someone had offered me that I'd been playing at top-40 level in the world when I had been struggling with my hip, I would have been happy with that."

"But it is hard, mentally, so I need to do a better job of putting things in perspective this year and be a little bit easier on myself."



Murray faces second seed Grigor Dimitrov in the first round in Brisbane on Monday.

Welcome

ISLAMABAD: A stunning view of the illuminated digits of 2024 as illuminated by traders to welcome the new years in Federal Capital.



Photo: Online

New Year 2024

Pakistan and the World bid adieu to 2023 after war, climate crisis

Agencies

ISLAMABAD: Jubilant crowds around the world, including Pakistan bid farewell to the hottest year on record 2023, closing a turbulent 12 months marked by clever chatbots, climate crises and wrenching wars in Gaza and Ukraine.

Much of the world's population — now more than eight billion — is hoping to shake off high living costs and global tumult in 2024, which will bring elections concerning half the world's population and the Paris Olympics.

Pakistan has announced a complete ban on New Year celebrations in an expression of solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Israel has vowed to destroy Hamas in retaliation for its October 7 attack, which left about 1,140 people dead, according to an AFP tally based on Israeli figures.

In response, Israel's relentless aerial bombardment and ground invasion with troops and tanks have killed at least 21,320 people, mostly women and children, and wounded another 55,603 people, according to Gaza's health ministry.

"Keeping in mind the seriously concerning situation in Palestine and to show solidarity with our Palestinian brothers and sisters, there will be a strict ban by the government on holding any kind of event for New Year," Pakistan's Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar said.

Police across the country said security and other arrangements, including measures against aerial firing, have been completed ahead of New Year's Eve.

In Sydney, the self-proclaimed "New Year's capital of the world", more than a million partygoers packed the harbour foreshore, with city officials and police warning that all vantage points were full.

Sydneysiders gathered through the day at prominent sites, defying uncharacteristically dank weather, and were not disappointed when the Harbour Bridge and other landmarks were garlanded in light and colour by eight tonnes of fireworks.

Pyrotechnics also illuminated the skies in Auckland, Hong Kong, Manila and Indonesia.

Fireworks explode over the city to usher in the New Year, as revellers gather around as

the lit National Monument of Indonesia (MONAS) in Jakarta on December 31, 2023 — AFP

The last 12 months brought "Barbiegeddon" at the box office, a proliferation of human-seeming artificial intelligence tools, and a world-first whole-eye transplant.

India outgrew China as the world's most populous country, and then became the first nation to land an unmanned craft on the Moon's south pole.

It was also the hottest year since records began in 1880, with a spate of climate-fuelled disasters striking across the world.

Fans bade adieu to "Queen of Rock 'n' Roll" Tina Turner, "Friends" actor Matthew Perry, hell-raising Anglo-Irish songsmith Shane MacGowan and master dystopian novelist Cormac McCarthy.

Perhaps more than anything, 2023 will be remembered for war in the Middle East, after Hamas's October 7 attacks on southern Israel and Israel's ferocious bombardment on Gaza.

The United Nations estimates that almost two million Gazans have been displaced since Israel's siege began, or about 85 percent of the peace-

time population.

Displaced Palestinian children stand next to a mural painting by artist Amal Abo in Rafah in the southern of Gaza Strip, on December 31, 2023, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian group Hamas — AFP

With once-bustling Gaza City neighbourhoods reduced to rubble, there were few places left to mark the new year — and fewer loved ones to celebrate with.

"It was a black year full of tragedies," said Abed Akkawi, who fled the city with his wife and three children.

The 37-year-old, now living in a UN shelter in Rafah, southern Gaza, said his house had been obliterated and his brother killed in the violence.

"God willing this war will end, the new year will be a better one, and we will be able to return to our homes and rebuild them, or even live in a tent on the rubble," he told AFP.

In Rome, Pope Francis prayed for the victims of conflicts around the globe, citing Ukrainians, Palestinians and the people of Sudan.

"At the end of a year, have the courage to ask how many lives have been torn apart in

armed conflicts, how many deaths?" the 87-year-old pontiff said after his Angelus prayer in St Peter's Square.

"And how much destruction, how much suffering, how much poverty? Those who have an interest in these conflicts, listen to the voice of conscience."

The political fate of more than four billion people will be decided in contests that will shape Britain, the European Union, India, Indonesia, Mexico, South Africa, Venezuela and a host of other nations.

In the United States, Democrat Joe Biden, 81, and Republican Donald Trump, 77, appear set for a November rerun of their divisive 2020 presidential race contest.

As the incumbent, Biden has at times appeared to show his advancing age and even his supporter's worry about the toll of another bruising four years in office.

There are at least as many concerns about a Trump return.

He faces prosecution on several counts and 2024 could determine whether the bombastic self-proclaimed billionaire goes to the Oval Office or jail.

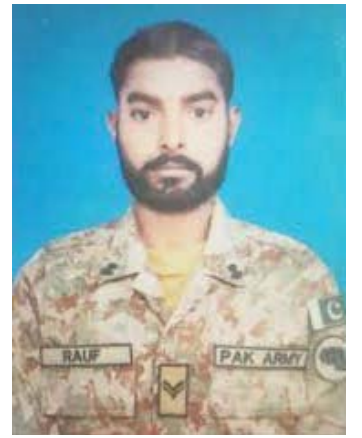
Three terrorists killed while infiltrating Pak-Afghan border: ISPR

City Desk

RAWALPINDI: A soldier of the Pakistan Army embraced martyrdom and three terrorists were killed in two separate clashes near the Afghanistan border. ISPR

According to military's media wing, the first incident occurred today when security forces detected the movement of three terrorists attempting to infiltrate the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in the general area of Batwar, Bajaur district.

Following a fierce exchange of fire, all three terrorists were killed, and security forces recovered a significant cache of weapons, ammunition, and explosives from the eliminated mili-



tants.

At least 566 terrorists killed by security forces 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 resulting in killing of 566 and the arrest of 5,161 terrorists in efforts to maintain peace and security.

According to the data issued today, 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.

Due to the effective operations, Gulzar Imam Shambe and Sarfaraz Bengalzai, the most important commanders of the Baloch National Army (BNA) left terrorism and

rejoined the national mainstream.

However, 15,063 intelligence-based operations were conducted in Balochistan and 109 terrorists were killed. Some 1,942 intelligence-based operations were conducted in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) wherein 447 terrorists were killed.

As many as 190 intelligence-based operations were conducted in Punjab, 14 in Gilgit-Baltistan and 1,987 in Sindh while 10 terrorists were killed.

More than 1,000 people, including more than 260 officers and soldiers of the Pakistan Army, embraced martyrdom 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," a statement noted.

ECP receives appeals against acceptance/rejection of nominations today



PPA

ISLAMABAD: The appeals against rejection or acceptance of nomination papers for general elections-2024 being received from today (Sunday).

The process of appeals against Returning Officers decision will continue till Wednesday.

The decisions on the appeals will be made by January 10, 2024.

The revised list of candidates will be displayed on January 11 and candidates can withdraw their nomination papers by January 12.

The election symbols to candidates will be allotted on January 13.

Gaza death toll reaches 21,822 as Palestinians end dark year amid Israeli attacks

AFP

GAZA STRIP: Israelis and Palestinians end a dark year on Sunday, with no end in sight to the deadliest military offensive on Gaza, triggered by Hamas' bloodiest attack on Israel.

There has been no respite from Israel's air raids, artillery fire or ground fighting with Hamas in the Gaza Strip, to the despair of Palestinians surviving the onslaught.

"We were hoping that 2024 would arrive under better auspices and that we would be able to celebrate the new year at home with our families," said Mahmoud Abou Shamma in a camp for displaced people in Rafah, on the Egyptian border.

"We hope that the war will end and that we will be able to return to our homes and live in peace," said the 33-year-old from Khan Yunis, an epicentre of the conflict in the south of Gaza.

Gaza's Hamas-run health ministry says the Israeli military campaign has killed at least 21,822 people, mostly women and children — by far the heaviest death toll of any Israeli operation.

On Sunday the ministry reported numerous deaths in overnight strikes on central Gaza's Zawayda and the nearby Al-Mughazi refugee camp.

The fighting began with Hamas's October 7 attacks, which left about 1,140 people dead in Israel, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on official figures.

Militants also took about 250 people hostage, and Israel says 129 of them remain in captivity.

The Israeli army says 170 soldiers have been killed in combat inside Gaza.

An Israeli siege imposed after October 7, following years of crippling blockade, has led to dire shortages of food, safe water, fuel and medicine in Gaza, with aid convoys able to



offer only sporadic relief.

The UN says more than 85 percent of Gaza's 2.4 million people have fled their homes.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has warned of the growing threat of infectious diseases and the UN says Gaza is "just weeks away" from famine.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Saturday that Israel's war against Hamas will last for "many months" — until the Palestinian militant group has been eliminated.

"We will guarantee that Gaza will no longer pose a threat to Israel," he told a news conference.

Sheikh Rasheed says SC had declared him 'Sadiq and Ameen'



City Desk

RAWALPINDI: Former interior minister and Awami Muslim League (AML) chief Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed on Sunday noted that the Supreme Court (SC) had declared him 'Sadiq and Ameen', lambasting the rejection of his nomination papers for general elections 2024.

A day earlier, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had rejected Sheikh Rasheed's nomination papers from NA-56 Rawalpindi-VI and NA-57 Rawalpindi-VI.

Talking to journalists here, the former interior minister said that he has tried to obtain a copy of the ECP's decision but has been unable to. "A copy should be given to me so I can move the Supreme Court and get my due right."

"I will not let go of my right to contest election and I will fight till my last breath for my legal and constitutional right," said Rasheed.

Bureau Report

KARACHI: Following the meeting between Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan (MQM-P) and Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) provincial committees, deadlock persisted between both sides over seat adjustment in Karachi.

According to sources, PML-N demanded MQM-P to withdraw Mustafa Kamal from NA 242 Baldia against the party president and former prime minister Shehbaz Sharif whereas they will support

MQM-P on provincial seat.

However, the MQM-P delegation refused and asked PML-N to support Mustafa Kamal as he is a strong candidate from NA 242, source said.

Meanwhile, MQM-P assured PML-N of their complete support on two National Assembly (NA 229 and 230) but the latter wants support on 7 NA and 20 provincial seats.

Furthermore, the senior leadership of both parties will take the final decision over the seat adjustment for the general election 2024, sources added.

PTI leader Latif Khosa's son arrested in Lahore

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Latif Khosa's son Khurram Latif Khosa was arrested in Lahore.

As per details, the police officials stated that an FIR was registered against Khurram Khosa in Mozang police station Lahore yesterday at 02:50 pm.

The FIR also includes terrorism acts, interfering in state affairs and robbery whereas unknown lawyers were also nominated in the FIR.

It is pertinent to mention here that Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) disgruntled leader Sardar Latif Khosa officially announced to joining the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), stating that he took the step "on the wish" of incarcerated PTI founder Imran



Khan.

In a press conference held in Lahore, Khosa emphasized that his move was driven by the "interest of the country and democracy," expressing his commitment to raising his voice for the truth.

"I have decided this only in the interest of the country and democracy," he said.