

Man from minority killed
F.P. Report

BARA: Unknown assailant riding a motorbike on Monday shot dead a member of minority community in Bara. Police said the minority member, Tariq Masih, working at public toilets as a cleaner was shot dead by an assailant. Tariq Masih received a fatal bullet in the head and died on the spot. Body of the deceased, belonging to Gujranwala, was shifted to a hospital in Shangar.



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RIYADH: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif meeting with Secretary General of World Muslim League, Sheikh Dr. Mohammad bin Issa on the sidelines of Arab-Islamic Extraordinary Summit.

Hajj 2025: Govt fixes Rs1.2m for pilgrimage

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Chaudhry Salik Hussain said on Monday next year Hajj would cost up to Rs1.2 million under the Government's Hajj Scheme 2025.

Announcing the Hajj Policy 2025, the minister said the Hajj cost is expected to range between Rs1,075,000 and Rs1,175,000, with an additional amount of Rs55,000 for the cost of sacrificial offering. Regarding pilgrim accommodations, the minister stated that applicants selecting double-bed and triple-bed options in Makkah will be required to make additional deposits of Rs220,000 and Rs75,000, respectively.

He said the pilgrims would get an opportunity to pay for Hajj in installments under the Hajj Scheme 2025. The first installment of Hajj dues, amounting to Rs200,000, must be deposited along with the application, he said, adding the second installment of Rs400,000 must be submitted within 10 days of the balloting. The remaining amount must be deposited by Feb 10 next year.

Chaudhry Salik Hussain stated that no deductions will be made if an application is withdrawn before the final submission date. However, if the first installment is refunded after the balloting, a deduction of Rs50,000 will apply. A deduction of Rs200,000 will be imposed if the third installment is not paid. The minister clarified that no refunds will be issued for the remaining amount

after February 10 of next year. However, in the event of the applicant's death, the aforementioned deductions will not be applied.

Salik said that a total of 179,210 Pakistanis will perform Hajj in 2025, with 89,605 seats allocated to both the government and private Hajj schemes, maintaining a 50:50 quota distribution. He added that 5,000 seats will be reserved for the sponsorship scheme under the government Hajj Scheme, while 30,000 seats will be allocated to private Hajj Group Organizers for sponsorship. Furthermore, he emphasized that participation in the sponsorship scheme requires sending foreign exchange through official banking channels.

Chaudhry Salik Hussain clarified that the government sponsorship scheme will be conducted on a 'first come, first served' basis and will not be subject to balloting. He also stated that the foreign exchange collected through the sponsorship scheme will be exclusively used for Hajj-related expenses in Saudi Arabia. The minister further explained that under the Government Hajj Scheme, the traditional long stay will last between 38 to 42 days, while the short stay will be from 20 to 25 days.

He also mentioned that, according to Saudi regulations, each organized private Hajj group must include at least 2,000 pilgrims. One major reason is that, generally, groups used to take only 10, 20, or 100 people, leading to difficulties in securing accommodation upon arrival. He explained that having a group of 2,000 will ensure better allocation of places.

Terrorism a common enemy of humanity, says China

BEIJING: Attempts to undermine the mutual trust and cooperation between Pakistan and China would not succeed as both countries shared a long history of cooperation in difficult times.

Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Lin Jian made these remarks during his regular press conference on Monday. At his presser he was asked, following the recent attacks on Chinese nationals in Pakistan, has the concern for the security of Chinese citizens increased in Pakistan?

He said, "China reiterates that terrorism is a common enemy of humanity so it is a shared responsibility of the international community to fight terrorism and prevent tragedies from happening again. China will continue to support Pakistan in fighting terrorism." He added, "We are firm in our commitment to protecting the safety and security of Chinese nationals, projects and institutions overseas. China and Pakistan have the resolve and capability to foil any attempt to harm China-Pakistan relations and ensure that terrorists will pay the price."

Jian continued, "China and Pakistan are all-weather strategic cooperative partners as our iron-clad friendship has taken deep roots among our peoples. Attempts to undermine the mutual trust and cooperation between the two countries will not succeed. He finished on this note, "China will continue to support Pakistan in developing its economy and society and improving people's life. We will firmly carry out cooperation with Pakistan in various fields for the benefit of the two peoples." — Agencies

IMF mission due in Islamabad F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) mission arrived here in Islamabad on Monday for holding negotiations with the federal government over various aspects of the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) worth \$7 billion.

The government team submitted its report of economic targets to the IMF mission while also briefing the global lender on overall economic situation.

Justice Mansoor: Is this bench 'unconstitutional'

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Amid prevailing uncertainty regarding the future of various cases in light of the issue of constitutional benches, the Supreme Court's senior puisne judge Justice Mansoor Ali Shah has raised questions on the constitutionality of existing benches until designated constitutional ones are not formed.

"Until a constitutional bench is formed, are we unconstitutional?" questioned Justice Mansoor during the proceedings of a tax-related case in the apex court being heard by a three-member bench including Justices Ayesha Malik and Aqeel Abbasi on Monday.

The judge's remarks come after the ruling coalition bulldozed the 26th Amendment in both the National Assembly and the Senate last month provisioning inter alia, the formation of designated constitutional benches at the apex court and the high courts. The contentious constitutional tweaks have

since then seemingly resulted in a rather uncanny ambiguity regarding the future of various cases and the domain of the benches hearing them.

During the hearing of the aforesaid case, Justice Ayesha pointed out that Justice Mansoor-led bench was an "ordinary one" and the case was supposed to be heard by a constitutional bench instead. "At present, there is no constitutional bench so what is to be done with this 'unconstitutional bench,'" responded the senior puisne judge.

Wondering whether constitutional cases won't be heard till a designated bench is formed, Justice Mansoor said that no one could question them even if they heard the said case.

"Even if we decide the case, what will happen? Who is going to stop us? [...] The review will also come to us, and [then] we can say that we have the [relevant] jurisdiction," he remarked while saying that the issue has been repeatedly raised whether a given case is to be heard by a reg-

ular bench or a constitutional one. In response to Justice Aqeel's query whether the three-member bench could hear the case before them, Justice Mansoor said: "Give [it] some time and see what happens."

Meanwhile, Justice Ayesha maintained that the SC Practice and Procedure Committee would decide the matter, which she added, would take some time. Noting that they could not provide any viewpoint, Justice Mansoor then adjourned the case indefinitely. This isn't the first time Justice Mansoor has commented on the said issue as last week, while hearing an over-billing case involving Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL), he said that every case should not be transferred to a constitutional bench.

It is pertinent to know that the Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP), on November 5, constituted a seven-member constitutional bench under Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan with a 7-5 decision.

KP govt decides to empanel more hospitals in Sehat Card panel

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, has decided in principles to expand the free treatment facilities under the Sehat Card Scheme by including more public and private hospitals in the Sehat Card panel.

He has directed the quarters concerned to immediately convene a meeting of the concerned policy board in order to accord final approval for the inclusion of hospitals meeting the quality standards of the Sehat Card Scheme. However, he made it clear that no compromise should be made on the laid down criteria for hospitals in this regard. Special concentra-

tion should be made on the distance between hospitals and population, aiming to ensure that at least one hospital at tehsil level is on the panel of Sehat Card scheme, he directed.

He issued these directives, while chairing a meeting of the Health Department held here on Monday. Besides, Advisor to the Chief Minister on Health, Ehtesham Ali, Additional Chief Secretary Planning and Development, Ikramullah Khan, Secretary Health, Syed Adeel Shah, and senior officials from the Health Department and its subsidiary organizations, including the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Health Foundation and Sehat Card Plus also attended the meeting.

The meeting thoroughly dis-



cussed, the empanelment of more hospitals under Sehat Card Scheme, outsourcing of hospitals in remote districts, reforms in the health sector, and other related matters. The meeting also reviewed the financial dues and other relevant matters of already outsourced public hospitals in certain districts of

the province. The Chief Minister directed the Finance Department to immediately clear the dues to ensure the resumption of healthcare services in these hospitals as soon as possible.

In light of the provincial cabinet's decision, the meeting also deliberated on outsourcing

additional hospitals through the Health Foundation, directing the Health department to present proposals for outsourcing more hospitals under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model by next month. It was decided in principle to simplify the existing complicated process of hospital outsourcing

by making necessary amendments to relevant legal framework, further deciding to constitute a steering committee under the chairmanship of Chief Minister to streamline the entire process of outsourcing. The meeting also decided, in principle, to provide free medicines to children suffering from hemophilia in collaboration with Roche Pharmaceuticals Company. The cost of these free medicines will be shared equally by the provincial government and Roche Pharmaceuticals Company. Speaking at the meeting, the Chief Minister said that providing healthcare services at the local level to residents of remote areas is one of the priority areas of incumbent provincial government. To this

end, efforts are being made to strengthen basic healthcare centers. The outsourcing of hospitals under the Public-Private Partnership model has resulted in promising results, and the process will be further improved to ensure the provision of quality healthcare services to residents of far-flung areas, he added. In addition to strengthening healthcare facilities at grass root level, efforts are underway to improve the services delivery mechanism under the Sehat Card Scheme and teaching hospitals, he said and expressed confidence that these initiatives would bring about visible change in the health sector in the near future.

Two suicide bombers held
F.P. Report

QUETTA: Two suicide bombers have been arrested in Balochistan during intelligence-based operations (IBOs). It reported in media that that two suicide bombers have been apprehended during targeted operations across various areas of Balochistan. The arrested terrorists were reportedly planning attacks on security forces and foreign nationals in Karachi.

Unabated Israeli war crimes PM calls for accountability

Premier leaves for Azerbaijan

RIYADH (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday left for Azerbaijan after attending the Arab-Islamic Extraordinary Summit, where he would participate in the "World Leaders' Climate Action Summit" of the 29th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP29), being held in Baku.

At the International Royal Terminal, Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmad Al-Malki, Pakistani Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Ahmed Farooq and other diplomatic staff saw off the prime minister, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. During his three-day visit to Azerbaijan, the prime minister represent Pakistan in conference, which is being organized to underscore efforts at reducing the climate pollution and to highlight the problems of those countries suffering from the harmful effects of climate change. The prime minister will highlight the dangers of the climate change affecting Pakistan. He will address the World Leaders Climate Action Summit on 13 November and attend several high-level events on the sidelines of the summit. Besides, he would hold bilateral meetings with world leaders. Several high-level events and roundtable discussions hosted by Pakistan will also take place at the Pakistan Pavilion during COP29.

itarian relief and protection of civilians". While houses with the occupants were being blown up, he said, the most sophisticated weapons were being supplied to Israel. Indeed, it was assured of unconditional assistance and support. The prime minister said the International laws which were meant to protect the vulnerable had been torn to shreds. "Humanity is being tested and failing while Gaza bleeds, the world watches in deafening silence," he added.

Prime Minister Sharif further said after decades of sufferings and oppression, the spirit of resistance of the Palestinians remained unbridled and flames of defiance burnt brighter even under the relentless siege. "Pakistan stands firm in its commitment to Palestine right to self-determination. We reiterate our unwavering support to establish an independent, viable and contiguous state of Palestine with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its Capital based upon its pre-1967 borders," he reaffirmed Pakistan's stance.

The prime minister said that it was the only avenue for justice and durable peace in the holy land. He said Pakistan strongly condemned Israel's recent strikes against Iran as an outright violation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity, adding "We equally denounce Israel's ongoing aggression against Lebanon and stand in complete solidarity with its peo-

ple."

He cautioned that such escalation by Israel constituted a dangerous threat that could unleash a broader war. The prime minister expressed the hope that this summit would be a moment to transform their words into action. "Together they should move beyond condemnation and act swiftly to uphold justice and dignity for the people of Palestine and all those who faced oppression." He also expressed his profound gratitude to the sagacious Saudi leadership for convening the summit.

Shehbaz meets Saudi Investment Minister: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif held a meeting with the Saudi Investment Minister Engr. Khalid bin Abdulaziz Al-Falih and Advisor Royal Court Mohammed Al-Tuwajri on the sidelines of the Arab Islamic Summit.

The meeting was held to follow-up on the recent engagements for economic cooperation between the two countries, a press release issued by the PM Office Press Win said.

In the meeting, the prime minister appreciated the progress on major projects under discussion and acknowledged the efforts of the technical teams for their close cooperation to further strengthen economic partnership in diverse fields. The prime minister is on a visit to Saudi Arabia to participate in the Arab Islamic Summit in Riyadh.

Saudi crown prince condemns Israeli attacks on Gaza, Lebanon

RIYADH: Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman renewed Saudi Arabia's rejection of Israeli attacks in Gaza and violations of Lebanon's sovereignty on Monday.

In his opening statement at an extraordinary Arab and Islamic summit hosted by Riyadh, the crown prince criticized the obstruction of humanitarian agencies' work in Gaza and rejected diminishing the role of the Palestinian Authority. "The Kingdom condemns the obstruction of the relief efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Palestinian territories, as well as the obstruction of the work of humanitarian organizations providing aid to the Palestinian people," Prince Mohammed said.

Israel has formally notified the UN of its decision to sever ties with UNRWA after Israeli lawmakers backed the move last week. The international community must "immediately halt the Israeli actions against our brothers in Palestine and Lebanon", the crown prince said, condemning Israel's campaign in Gaza as "genocide."

"We condemn the Israeli military operations that targeted Lebanese territories and we reject anything that threatens Lebanon's stability and safety as well as anything that violates its territorial integrity. "Israel's continued criminal actions against innocent people, its violation of the sanctity of Al-Aqsa

Mosque, and its undermining of the Palestinian Authority's pivotal role in all Palestinian territories will hinder efforts to secure the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and establish regional peace," the crown prince said.

He also condemned attacks on Iran, saying that the international community should oblige Israel to respect "the sovereignty of the Islamic Republic of Iran" and cease all hostile actions on Iranian territories. "We stand with our brothers in Palestine and Lebanon," the crown prince added. The crown prince also said that Palestine qualifies for full membership in the UN, and stressed the necessity of establishing a Palestinian state. "We launched a global initiative to support the two-state solution," he said. Saudi Arabia has succeeded in calling more peace-loving countries to recognize a Palestinian state, through the UN General Assembly, considering that Palestine is eligible for a full membership, the crown prince said.

Arab-Islamic leaders arrived in Riyadh on Monday ahead of a Saudi Arabia-sponsored follow-up summit focusing on Israel's wars in Gaza and Lebanon. Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, UAE Vice President, Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of the Presidential Court; Shavkat Mirziyoyev, president of Uzbekistan; Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, Sudanese Transitional Sovereign Council President; Bashar Assad, president of

Syria; Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani, prime minister of Iraq; Sheikh Khalid bin Abdulla Al-Khalifa, Deputy Prime Minister of Bahrain; and Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, president of Egypt, arrived in Riyadh on Monday to join the extraordinary summit.

King Abdullah II of Jordan, Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Qatar ruler Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Kuwait Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Iran First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref and Omani Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hamood Al-Busaidi also arrived on Monday in Riyadh. Bakary Yaro Sangare, Niger's Minister for Foreign Affairs, also arrived for the event.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas arrived on Sunday, so did Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati, Algerian Foreign Minister Ahmed Attaf, the Foreign Minister of Guinea Morissanda Kouyate, the President of Senegal Bassirou Diomaye Faye, Chad's President Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno, the President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon, Nigerian President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, and Uganda's Third Deputy Prime Minister Lukia Isanga Nakadama. The President of Mauritania Mohamed Ould Ghazouani arrived in the Kingdom's capital on Sunday after performing Umrah and praying in the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah on Saturday. — Arab News

Sharjeel discusses cooperation with UAE Consul General

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Senior Sindh Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon was met by United Arab Emirates Consul General Bakhit Atiq Al Rumiti at his office in Clifton Karachi.

During the meeting between Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon and UAE Consul General Bakhit Atiq Al Rumiti, both officials discussed ways to strengthen shared values and enhance cooperation in various fields.

During the meeting, the UAE Consul General invited Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon to join the UAE's National Day celebrations. Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon assured to celebrate the brotherly Islamic

country United Arab Emirates with national fraternal enthusiasm.

In the meeting between Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon and Emirati Consul General Bakhit Atiq Rumiti, it was agreed to further promote economic and social development and cooperation. UAE Consul General Bakhit Atiq al-Rumiti praised Sindh government's anti-narcotics initiatives. On the occasion of the meeting, Consul General Bakhit Atiq al-Rumiti said that free medical camps are also going to be set up by the UAE government in various cities for the people of Sindh.

Speaking on the occasion, Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the mutual brotherly relations between the

United Arab Emirates and Sindh span decades, UAE's efforts for the people of Sindh are unforgettable. Arab Emirates is our long-time brother country, the efforts of Arab Emirates for the development of Pakistan, especially Sindh, are not hidden from anyone.

He said that the people of UAE have stood by the people of Sindh in every difficult time, UAE investment is playing a significant role in the infrastructure, health and education sector of Sindh.

Sindh Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that The Government of Sindh is committed to enhancing the partnership with the Government of the Emirates, promoting peace and prosperity and deepening these relations.



Train service suspended in southwest Pakistan

KARACHI (AA): Authorities suspended railway services in southwest Pakistan on Monday following a deadly explosion at Quetta railway station that killed 26 people and injured dozens of others on Saturday.

All the trains from and to southwestern Balochistan province will remain suspended for next four days, a statement from Pakistan Railways said.

The provincial government also announced a three-day mourning in solidarity with the victims of Saturday's deadly bombing. A suspected suicide bomber, according to security forces,

blew himself up in the midst of over 100 passengers, including military personnel, who were waiting for a train at the railway station in provincial capital Quetta.

According to police, 14 military personnel were among the deceased, while several others were injured. Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), an outlawed militant group, claimed responsibility for the attack. The group has long been targeting security forces and residents of other provinces in Balochistan.

Pakistan's largest Balochistan province, which borders neighboring Iran and Afghanistan, is

strategically important due to its rich copper, zinc, and natural gas reserves.

The province is also a key route of the \$64 billion mega project Quetta-China Economic Corridor (PCEC), which aims to connect China's strategically important northwestern Xinjiang province to Balochistan's Gwadar port through a network of roads, railways, and pipelines for cargo, oil, and gas transportation.

However, Baloch separatists, mainly BLA, who have allegedly been involved in kidnapping and murdering Chinese workers in the recent past, oppose the project.

Festival draws thousands at Beach View Park

Kinza Sualiha

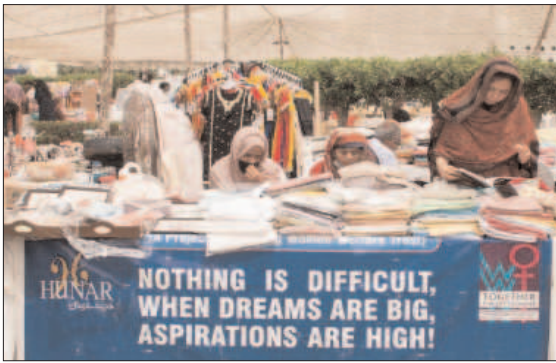
KARACHI: Behbud Association, a prominent NGO renowned for its contributions to education, healthcare, teacher training, and vocational development, recently organized a lively festival at Beach View Park. The event attracted thousands of attendees from diverse backgrounds and showcased the association's ongoing commitment to community development and social welfare.

The festival featured a variety of activities and stalls, offering visitors insights into Behbud's vocational programs and other initiatives. Attendees enjoyed an engaging lineup

of performances and displays, and many well-known figures from Karachi's social and professional circles participated, adding to the event's appeal and reach.

This gathering not only brought families and friends together in celebration but

also emphasized the importance of collective action toward education and health improvement in Pakistan. Behbud Association continues to make strides in these sectors, supporting individuals and communities in meaningful ways.



Minister inaugurate renovation at Gurdwara Rohri Sahib

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Minister for Minorities Affairs, Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora, along with Punjab Home Secretary, Noor ul Amin Mengal on Monday visited Aimanabad, Gujranwala, to inaugurate the conservation and renovation work at Gurdwara Rohri Sahib.

The minister and the secretary also reviewed the final preparations ahead of the arrival of Sikh pilgrims for the celebrations of Baba Guru Nanak Dev Ji's 555th birth anniversary.

During the visit, Commissioner Naveed Haider Shirazi, Regional Police Officer (RPO) Tayyab Hafeez, Deputy

Police Officer (CPO) provided a detailed briefing to the Minister and Secretary on the arrangements.

Speaking at the inaugural ceremony, Provincial Minister Ramesh Singh Arora said that the arrival of Sikh pilgrims from around the world was ongoing for the 555th birth anniversary celebrations of Baba Guru Nanak. He added that the pilgrims would arrive at Gurdwara Rohri Sahib, Aimanabad, on November 20.

He emphasized that promoting religious tourism would enhance Pakistan's positive image globally. The preservation and maintenance of religious sites, including the Gurdwara, was essential in this regard. The

minister also revealed that the renovation and expansion of the Gurdwara would cost approximately Rs45 million and all necessary facilities for the Sikh pilgrims were being ensured to provide a safe and comfortable experience.

Punjab Home Secretary Noor ul Amin Mengal said that Pakistan's rich historical and religious heritage continues to attract tourists from around the world. He assured that the provincial government was taking every possible step to promote tourism and highlight Pakistan's positive image. He further emphasized that a peaceful environment, robust security measures, and excellent arrangements were being made to boost tourism in the region.

Russian Ambassador calls on Tessori

KARACHI (APP): The Ambassador of the Russian Federation in Pakistan Albert Khorev called on Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori at Governor House on Monday.

Pakistan-Russia relations and other matters of mutual interests were discussed during meeting of the both dignitaries. According to Governor House spokesman, the Russian envoy was presented guard of honour on arrival at the Governor House.

Governor Kamran Khan Tessori, while talking to the Russian top diplomat, said Pakistan and Russia want the best relations to each other and Russian Federation wants to prove its friendship in the current economic situation.

Governor Kamran Tessori and the Russian Ambassador hoisted the flags of both the countries. The Russian Consul General in Karachi was also present on the occasion. Russian Ambassador also penned his impressions in the guest book and also visited the Quaid-e-Azam Gallery. Ambassador Albert Khorev was served with Karachi's famous burger and "Matka Tea". Tessori said that Russia and Pakistan enjoy very good relations.

He also referred the recent visit of the Deputy Prime Minister of Russia to Pakistan. Governor said that the Russian Ambassador has been invited to invest in the province.

Later, Governor Kamran Khan Tessori presented a cap and shawl of honor to the Russian Ambassador and the Consul General. The Russian Ambassador also planted a sapling at the Governor House as part of the tree plantation campaign.

Punjab records 63 new dengue cases

LAHORE (APP): The Health Department reported 63 new cases of dengue fever on Monday, bringing the province's total to 6,901 cases for the year. Most of the new cases were recorded in Rawalpindi, with 59 infections, while single case emerged in Lahore, Chakwal, Sahiwal, and Okara.

So far this week, 750 new cases were registered across the province. Health authorities had assured the public that hospitals were well-equipped with essential medications and prepared to handle the increasing number of patients.

Health officials were urging residents to maintain cleanliness and eliminate standing water to prevent further spread of Dengue. They had emphasized the need for preventive measures and called for public cooperation with health teams working in affected areas.

To assist the public, the Health Department had established a helpline at 1033 for those seeking information or wishing to report Dengue-related concerns. The department was calling for increased public awareness and strict adherence to preventive actions to curb dengue cases across Punjab.

Punjab records 63 new dengue cases

LAHORE (APP): Prime Minister's Youth Programme Chairman Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan has said that the government is working day and night to provide basic facilities to the people and the elements who defamed the country were now defaming themselves.

He expressed these views at a cheque distribution ceremony among lucky winners who were declared eligible for loans under the "Apni Chhat Apna Ghar" scheme at Babu Sabu on Monday. Rana Mashhood said that Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif would inaugurate the "Green Youth Movement" programme next month to deal with climate change. "The government believes in action not promises. The Apni Chhat Apna Ghar program is the fulfillment of the promise made to the people," he added.

Mashhood said that all resources were being utilised for the improvement of backward areas, especially those which are deprived

PFA disposed of adulterated milk

LAHORE (APP): In a significant move to combat the widespread issue of milk adulteration, the Punjab Food Authority (PFA) has intensified its crackdown on the milk mafia, conducting extensive inspections across Lahore. The operation has led to the seizure and disposal of 12,000 liters of adulterated milk in just a single day.

As part of the ongoing effort, 80,000 liters of milk were thoroughly checked, and 12,000 liters were found to be contaminated with harmful additives, including water, powdered milk, and reduced fat content. This milk was immediately disposed of to ensure public safety.

The PFA inspected 45 milk-carrying vehicles entering Lahore, with 40 passing the quality checks, while the remaining five were found to be carrying adulterated milk. The inspections were conducted at key entry points into the city, including Babu Sabu, Thokar Niaz Baig, and Ravi Bridge in the early morning hours.

Minister awards Rs. 50 million to CTD for successful terrorist apprehensions



F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Sindh Home Minister Zia Ul Hassan Lanjar, announced a reward of Rs. 50 million and commendation certificates for the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) and its team for their significant achievements in apprehending terrorists involved in a high-profile case.

Additionally, recommendations for QPM (Quaid-e-

Azam Police Medal) and PPM (President's Police Medal) awards are being made for the CTD officers and their team.

At a press conference held at the Central Police Office in Karachi, the minister praised the CTD's role in the arrest of terrorists involved in the airport attack. Also present were IGP Sindh Ghulam Nabi Memon, Additional IG CTD Imran Yaqub Minhas, DIG CTD,

and other senior officers.

The minister elaborated that the investigation identified a suicide attacker, Shah Fahad, with evidence such as the attacker's hand, vehicle, and other remnants. The attackers' accomplices included a rickshaw driver, Farhan, and Muhammad Sharif. Additionally, the vehicle used in the attack was registered under the suicide bomber's name and pur-

chased from a showroom.

An amount of Rs. 7.1 million was transferred from a bank in Hub for the vehicle purchase, with the funds originating from an account belonging to a man named Saeed Ali, and the attack was further facilitated by a bank employee named Bilal.

According to the investigation, the vehicle used for the suicide attack was prepared at an undisclosed location in Hub. The car was loaded with a chemical known as "paint" combined with RDX for the explosion. A woman named Gul Nisa was used to bring the car to Karachi, and surveillance at the airport was carried out by a person named Javed, who also informed the suicide attacker about the Chinese nationals' exit from the airport.

The report further revealed that a terrorist named Danish is a technical expert in bomb-making and was nearby during the explosion. Additionally, Rehman Gul is identified as a facilitator for the BLA, while Bashir Zaib, another terrorist, is reportedly managing operations from abroad.

Pakistan, Russian experts to discuss revival of Steel Mill: Murad

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has said that efforts to revive Pakistan Steel Mill are making progress as an online meeting is scheduled for next week between Pakistani experts and representatives from Russia, which will be followed by an on-site visit from a Russian delegation to the Steel Mill. It marks a significant advancement in the mill's restoration.

This development was discussed during a meeting between CM Syed Murad Ali Shah and Russian Ambassador Albert Khorev, who visited him at the Chief Minister's House on Monday. CM Shah was accompanied by his Secretary, Raheem Shaikh, while the Russian Ambassador was joined by Russian Consul General Andrey Fedorov, Third Secretary Pavel Iamanov, and Attache Ekaterina Zhigach.

At the start of the meeting, CM Shah emphasised the historical importance of the Pakistan Steel Mill, which was established in Karachi in 1974 with assistance from the Russian government during Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's tenure. He added, "The Steel Mill was a gift from Prime Minister Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and has provided employment to people from across Pakistan." He said that the Pakistan Peoples

Party has a strong commitment to the mill's revival.

According to the Russian Ambassador, the upcoming online meeting will involve discussions on the technical aspects of the project, including participation from a representative of the Sindh Industries Department. Following this, the Russian delegation will visit the Steel Mill for further assessments. The CM and Ambassador Khorev agreed that a modern plant will be installed to replace the outdated infrastructure, with hopes that this revival will restore employment for its workers. CM Shah and Ambassador Khorev discussed potential investment opportunities in Sindh.

The ambassador expressed interest from Russian companies in investing in Karachi's public transportation, specifically by introducing electric buses. CM Shah instructed Secretary Raheem Shaikh to coordinate with the Transport Department for necessary collaboration on this initiative.

Ambassador Khorev also expressed a desire to establish Russian cultural centers in various cities within Sindh to promote art, music, and language, thereby strengthening cultural ties between Russia and Pakistan. CM Shah assured him that the Culture Department would coordinate with the Russian Consulate in Karachi.

Governor for mass awareness on human trafficking

LAHORE (APP): Participants in a workshop on measures for prevention of human trafficking called on Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider Khan at the Governor's House here on Monday.

The two-day training workshop in human trafficking was organized in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and IFA. Speaking on the occasion, Governor Sardar Saleem Haider Khan said that going abroad through illegal means is a crime and there is a need to create awareness among people so that they don't fall victim to those who are involved in the criminal business of human trafficking.

He said that in this regard, institutions and organizations working for creating awareness among people and providing them with accurate information are commendable.

The Governor, while appreciating the efforts of Chief of Mission IOM, Pakistan, M. Mio Sato, said that the International Organization for Migration was making great efforts to increase the capacity of government institutions as well as non-governmental organizations and civil society and to raise awareness among the people.

The Governor Punjab also congratulated the organizers for the successfully organizing the two-day training workshop on identifying the victims of human trafficking in Lahore, giving them access to relevant institutions and providing them support for rehabilitation. The delegation was led by IOM Project Assistant Ayesha Panizai and Programme Assistant Nimra Nazir while representatives of civil society organizations, Abdul Shakoor Mirza, Zahida Parveen, Shahzad Naqvi, Ashfaq Nazir and Musa Ashfaq were also present.

PSCA to monitor smoky vehicles

LAHORE (APP): In a continued effort to tackle growing pollution caused by smoke-emitting vehicles, the Punjab Transport Department has geared up its operations.

In this regard, the Punjab government has assigned the responsibility of monitoring smoke-emitting vehicles to the Punjab Safe City Authority (PSCA). With this new measure, any vehicle emitting excessive smoke will now be detected through the cameras installed by the authority, making it difficult for such vehicles to escape scrutiny.

In a statement, Secretary Transport Ahmad Javed Qazi informed the public that strict legal action was being taken against vehicles emitting harmful smoke. He further urged vehicle owners and drivers to ensure their vehicles were in good condition to avoid any legal complications. "To avoid any inconvenience, vehicle owners should repair their vehicles promptly, as any vehicle found to be polluting the environment will be held accountable under the law," he stated.

Special attention was being given to buses and trucks, as they were the primary culprits in air pollution. Teams from the Transport and Mass Transit Authority were working tirelessly, carrying out round-the-clock checks in the field, he said. The goal of this initiative was to reduce air pollution and improve the overall environmental quality in the province by holding accountable those responsible for contributing to it, he added.

The transport department was striving to combat environmental degradation and ensure cleaner air for the residents of Punjab. The government is hopeful that with these efforts, the air quality will significantly improve, contributing to a healthier and more sustainable environment.

Cheques awarded to winners of 'Apni Chhat Apna Ghar'

LAHORE (APP): Prime Minister's Youth Programme Chairman Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan has said that the government is working day and night to provide basic facilities to the people and the elements who defamed the country were now defaming themselves.

He expressed these views at a cheque distribution ceremony among lucky winners who were declared eligible for loans under the "Apni Chhat Apna Ghar" scheme at Babu Sabu on Monday. Rana Mashhood said that Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif would inaugurate the "Green Youth Movement" programme next month to deal with climate change. "The government believes in action not promises. The Apni Chhat Apna Ghar program is the fulfillment of the promise made to the people," he added.

Mashhood said that all resources were being utilised for the improvement of backward areas, especially those which are deprived of basic facilities even though they are in Lahore. "Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has given a special package for these areas and in this regard development work will start next year," he added.

He said Maryam Nawaz had won the hearts of the people of Punjab by giving a wonderful project Apni Chhat Apna Ghar worth Rs700 billion. "We are serving the people day and night and the country has reached a position to take-off, and inflation has reduced," he added.

He said that the federal government under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was playing its full role in bringing the Muslim world together. "The international community has to come together regarding climate change and in this regard Pakistan is playing its key role. Pakistan's share in environmental pollution is very small, but we are suffering worst consequences. The people of Pakistan are being deprived of air and light.

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif will go to Baku and discuss this issue," he maintained.

Mashhood said that the government was taking all possible measures to empower the youth by following its election manifesto. "The federation has started the Green Youth Movement and PM Shehbaz Sharif will inaugurate the programme next month. The Green Youth Movement is a very important programme of the PM Youth programme under which young innovators are encouraged to promote the prevention of climate change, including financing the youth in resources needed to deal with climate change in the country," he said.

He said that under the program, the youth would not only be made aware of the prevention of environmental and climate change, but also small-scale grants would be provided to overcome crises through innovative methods in various fields.



PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister of Sports Syed Fakhar Jehan giving away winning trophy to Tent Pegging team at the end of Horse and Cattle Show.

Combating smog crisis Saifullah criticizes govt's ineffectiveness

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Salim Saifullah Khan, former Federal Minister and Senator has expressed profound concern and frustration over the government's repeated failure to effectively address the smog crisis that plagues Pakistan, particularly Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Each year, as smog returns, it brings with it severe health and environmental repercussions, yet the government's response remains insufficient and disjointed.

"Smog is not a new issue; it has become an annual catastrophe that severely affects public health, prolongs hospital stays, contaminates water sources, and jeopardizes our agricultural yields," Mr. Khan stated.

"Despite the clear and present danger, the gov-

ernment's efforts to enforce and maintain anti-smog regulations have been weak and lack proper implementation."

Referring to the constitutional right to a clean and healthy environment guaranteed by the 26th Amendment, Mr. Khan underscored that the government is constitutionally obligated to protect its citizens from environmental hazards.

He called the current measures "half-hearted at best" and criticized officials for prioritizing short-term economic gains over long-term public health and environmental sustainability.

"While some initiatives have been announced, particularly in Punjab, the truth is that they have fallen short due to poor enforcement and a lack of strategic planning.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, among other regions, is

still waiting for comprehensive action plans that match the scale of this crisis," Mr. Khan said.

The main contributors to the worsening smog problem include unchecked traffic pollution, persistent crop burning, and rapid industrial growth, all areas where government regulation has been inadequate.

The resulting air pollution exacerbates numerous health problems, including allergies, asthma, weakened immunity, and heart diseases.

"The government's inaction is inexcusable. It's time to stop treating smog as a seasonal inconvenience and recognize it for what it truly is—a public health emergency," Mr. Khan concluded, urging the authorities to finally take the strong, decisive measures needed to combat this escalating crisis.

Pesco notifies power suspension

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) on Monday notified that due to maintenance work power supply will remain suspended from Jamrud Grid Station on 13th and 17th November from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Consequently, it consumers of Hayatabad 1,3,4,5, New Hayatabad Health Care Hospital, Kidney Centre, RMI, Kacha Garhi, Karkhano, PIC, Hayatabad Surgical, Peshawar General, Foundation Hospital, Cell Wood, Northern Bottling, PCB, Alhaj, PSF, Olympia, Omroc, Industrial Estate, Mohmand Steel, Alhafiz, Frontier Tech Wood, PPI, Mika Steel, Express 1,2,3,4, PHA feeders will face inconvenience.

The power supply will remain suspended from Phase 7 Hayatabad Grid Station on 13th and 17th from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. resultantly, consumers of Green Wood, Frontier Ceramics feeders will face inconvenience. The power supply will remain suspended from Jamrud Grid Station on 13th, 17th November from 8:00 AM to 2:00 PM, resultantly consumers of Gull Abad and Tajabad 2 feeders will face inconvenience.

Likewise, the power supply will remain suspended from Peshawar University grid station on 13th and 17th November from 8AM to 2PM, resultantly, consumers of University Campus, Canal Town, M a l a k a n d h e r , Engineering, Agriculture, Taj Abad, Taj Abad 2, Danish Abad, Gharib Abad, Rahat Abad 1, CMB, Old Bara Road, JAF, Academy Town, Circular Road, Askari 6, Regi feeders will face inconvenience.

Teachers, students visit KP Assembly

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Teachers and students from a private educational institution in Peshawar visited the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial Assembly on a study tour. Acting Secretary Syed Waqar Shah welcomed the students on this occasion.

Acting Secretary Syed Waqar Shah and Assistant Secretary Saifullah Khan briefed the delegation on the assembly's proceedings, the stages and procedures of legislation, the roles of standing, special, and public accounts committees, budg-

et preparation and presentation, constitutional amendments, and in-house voting.

While answering the students' questions, Acting Secretary Syed Waqar Shah said that, according to the vision of Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Babar Saleem Swati, the doors of the assembly have been opened for students of educational institutions so that the younger generation can understand the importance of parliament.

He informed the delegation that the hall where they were gathered today, known as the Old Jirga Hall, has hosted many historical

meetings, and even the founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam, has visited this place.

To declare it a historical heritage, the Provincial Assembly, in collaboration with the Department of Archaeology, will restore it to its original condition and display the complete history of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly.

Later, the students were given a tour of the offices of the Speaker, Deputy Speaker, Leader of the House, the hall, galleries, and library, and a commemorative group photo was taken.

Horse and Cattle Show concludes with great fanfare

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The first-ever three-day Horse and Cattle Show a cultural festival in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa concluded with full splendor. Provincial Minister of Sports Syed Fakhar Jehan and Minister for Public Health Pakhtoon Yar distributed trophies and cash prizes among the winners in the closing ceremony.

They were joined by Umar Amin Gandapur, Sports Secretary Mutiullah Khan, DG Sports Abdul Nasir, Director Merged Districts Raziullah, Director of Operations Nematullah, Deputy Director Jamshed Baloch and other prominent figures.

On the final day of the event organized by the Directorate General of Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa thrilling and exciting tent pegging competitions were held.

The festival featured horse and animal races, pigeon racing, traditional

games, folk music, art exhibitions, traditional dance, a family festival, poetry sessions, a dog show and a vintage car show. Over 800 horses participated in the tent pegging events, while other traditional competitions included kabaddi, wrestling, camel races, camel dancing, and dog races, with a total of 16 events.

The Horse and Cattle Show remained a center of attraction at Sher Khan Stadium in Peshawar throughout the three days with cultural music shows entertaining women, children and youth.

Performers such as Zarsanga, Zeeshan Ghaznavi, Jim Band, Khumarian Band, and Sofia Kaif captivated the audience with mesmerizing performances, creating a lively atmosphere. Various food and exhibit stalls also attracted visitors while the evening musical show featuring renowned singers added sparkle to the closing

moments.

In his closing remarks Provincial Minister for Sports Syed Fakhar Jehan emphasized that this was the first significant event of its kind in the province organized by the current provincial government. He highlighted the government's commitment to reviving traditional and cultural games and festivals as they are integral to the region's historical identity. He added that under the guidance of the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa significant steps are being taken to promote sports in the province to foster a peaceful and healthy society.

He expressed his gratitude to the Chief Minister for prioritizing sports development and pledged to dedicate his efforts to advancing this sector. The minister further noted that the region is rich in unique culture and history, and preserving these traditional festivals for future generations is crucial.

Al-Kabir Awan Club secured first position in Tent Pegging Competitions

The three-day cultural festival organized by the Directorate General of Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa concluded with exciting tent pegging competitions.

Al-Kabir Awan Club secured first place in the single tent pegging events Provincial Minister of Sports Syed Fakhar Jehan and Provincial Minister of Public Health Pakhtoon Yar Khan distributed the prizes.

Held for the first time in Peshawar the festival's tent pegging events saw participation from 127 clubs from across the country including a female participant who competed in single tent pegging for the first time.

In the single tent pegging competition held at Sher Khan Stadium Peshawar Al-Kabir Awan Club clinched first place while Al-Awan Horse mainship Club took second and Khari Sharif Pir Shah Ghazi Club secured third.

Sugar Mills in DI Khan urge govt to adhere courts decisions

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The administrations of existing sugar mills in Dera Ismail Khan have urged the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government to adhere to Peshawar High Court and Supreme Court rulings regarding the establishment of new sugar mill, on Monday.

In a letter sent by Ishaq Ali Qazi advocate to

Chief Secretary, Secretary Agriculture, and Secretary Food and emphasized that the Peshawar High Court had imposed a ban on new sugar mills in D.I. Khan in 2018 and 2024.

The letter highlighted that new mills require a minimum distance of 35 kilometers from existing mills, sufficient water, and cane supply.

Establishing new mills would violate court rulings aimed at preventing over-expansion and soil degradation. The letter cited multiple court decisions and warned that issuing NOCs for new mills would exacerbate problems.

The letter comes after the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government hinted at granting permission for

the new sugar mill. Currently, the existing four sugar mills in D.I. Khan are facing difficulties in crushing cane, with 30-40% being imported from Punjab.

The letter cited multiple court decisions, including those from the Supreme Court, and warned that issuing NOCs for new mills would have severe consequences.

Future World School and College organizes university fair

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Future World School and College DHA organized the largest university fair in Peshawar, bringing together over 50 local and International Universities.

The event, held under the patronage of Mrs Tahmina Khalid, Mrs Meena Nasir and Rabia Imtiaz. The success of this university fair underscores the commitment of the institution to empower students by connecting them with renowned universities hailing from USA, UK, Germany, Turkey, Malaysia, Canada and local institutions paving the way for their academic and professional success.



While FWS&C students took center stage, the fair also welcomed enthusiastic students from prominent educational institutions such as Beaconhouse, Bloomfield

Hall, Lahore Grammar School, Hadaf College, The City School, International Islamic University (IIUI), ILM, Peshawar Model, Pak Turk and

Army Public School (APS). This diverse participation not only enriched the exchange of knowledge but also fostered a collaborative spirit among the attendees.

Kallar Kahar Salt Range: A Perilous Segment of the Motorway

Shah Asad Khan

THE Islamabad-Lahore Motorway, commonly known as M-2, was inaugurated in 1997 and serves as a flagship project that has transformed Pakistan's road infrastructure. This motorway has revolutionized travel and transportation, making them more accessible and cost-effective. However, amid its many advantages, M-2 harbors significant dangers, particularly in the Kallar Kahar Salt Range—an area that requires urgent

governmental intervention.

The 10-kilometer stretch through the Kallar Kahar Salt Range, once known for its stunning landscape, has unfortunately become notorious for frequent accidents. The region's captivating salt formations and tranquil vistas are now overshadowed by a grim reality: a high incidence of accidents and fatalities. Since its inception, this segment has claimed many lives, leaving families shattered and communities in mourning. The financial toll, amounting to billions in property damage, adds another layer to this

tragedy.

International road safety guidelines typically recommend a gradient of no steeper than 3% to 4% for motorways to ensure vehicle safety, particularly for heavy traffic. In contrast, the Kallar Kahar Salt Range features gradients ranging from 6% to 8%, significantly exceeding these safe limits. This steepness increases the risk of brake failure and catastrophic accidents, resulting in devastating consequences.

A tragic incident on June 09, 2024, underscores the dangers of this perilous segment.

A gas bowser lost control on the steep slopes, colliding with a car and igniting a catastrophic fire. Tragically, a doctor, his wife, and their two children perished in the blaze, alongside the crew of the gas bowser. This is just one of many incidents; hundreds of accidents have occurred at this site since M-2's launch, leading to numerous fatalities and immense property damage.

The Kallar Kahar Salt Range's most alarming feature is its steep inclines and sharp turns, which violate international safety standards. These

hazardous gradients demand exceptional driving skills and impeccable vehicle condition. A momentary lapse in judgment or a minor vehicle malfunction can lead to lethal consequences. Even well-maintained vehicles struggle to maintain control on these treacherous slopes, heightening the risk of accidents.

In response to the alarming situation, the National Highways & Motorways Police (NH&MP) and the National Highway Authority (NHA) have taken several measures to mitigate road crashes in the Salt Range.

These include deploying additional NHMP officers and patrol vehicles, utilizing advanced speed-measuring equipment, enhancing road signage, setting up emergency climbs, improved banking on the curves, and initiating a Public Service Vehicle (PSV) convoy system. While these steps are commendable, they serve as temporary fixes rather than long-term solutions.

To ensure the safety of commuters and prevent further tragedies, a more permanent resolution is imperative. This necessitates a thorough

redesign of the existing road to eliminate steep slopes and sharp curves. Exploring design alternatives, such as gentler gradients could significantly enhance safety of commuters. Transforming this notorious black spot into a safe passage for travelers is not just a challenge for the government; it is an urgent obligation. By prioritizing impactful design interventions that comply with international standards, we can transform this perilous stretch of motorway into a safer thoroughfare, ultimately safeguarding the precious lives and property of commuters.

Amir Muqam: A leader's journey

Azmat Khan Dawoodzai

IN the political landscape of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, Engineer Amir Muqam is not just known as a political leader, but also recognized as a leader who has paid the greatest price in his political life for the service of the people and the development of the province. Allah Almighty has not only elevated his status but also granted him a heart and courage that are often discussed in every political circle.

Amir Muqam's political journey has been so difficult that it can be understood not only by his close associates but also by his opponents. When we examine his political life, one thing is clear: he has always put aside his own happi-

ness and comfort to serve the people of his province and his party workers. In fact, during his youth, Amir Muqam spent 85% of his time traveling. Despite spending the majority of his life on the road, he met with every single worker, listened to their hardships and problems, and took steps to resolve them.

Amir Muqam's greatest attribute is his resilience. He not only accepts criticism gracefully but also stays in constant touch with his party workers, listening to their issues and working tirelessly to solve them. Under his leadership, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) faced every difficulty and challenge, especially when his opponents were working against him through various schemes.

During the tenure of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the leaders of PML-N faced the harshest of times. Amir Muqam was not only politically attacked, but false cases were also registered against him and his family. Even his son was targeted with false FIRs. Additionally, his close associates, such as former Tehsil Chairman and former provincial assembly candidate Azmat Khan, had charges of sedition filed against them. State-level actions were taken against them. However, despite all these challenges and pressures, Amir Muqam never abandoned his party or his leadership, particularly his unwavering support for Nawaz Sharif.

He continued to meet work-

ers in every district, held press conferences, and kept boosting the morale of his party. It was this very resilience that enabled PML-N to maintain its presence in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and win the trust of the people.

In the 2024 elections, Amir Muqam stood firm by fielding candidates across the province and establishing a strong opposition. While he was not able to form the provincial government—largely due to the emotional support the youth gave to Imran Khan—he worked tirelessly to build a robust opposition. He not only challenged his political rivals but also managed to bring several significant figures into his party, further strengthening PML-N's position in the province.

Peshawar, which had long been considered a stronghold of

PTI, saw Amir Muqam achieve significant success. He successfully elected two Members of Provincial Assembly (MPAs) and managed to bring in one more MPA to his party. Working together with them, he further consolidated his party's presence in the region. This victory marked a historic achievement and demonstrated Amir Muqam's leadership skills.

When the federal government needed Members of National Assembly (MNAs) from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Amir Muqam played a crucial role. During the constitutional amendment bills process, he effectively rallied his members and ensured PML-N's significant representation in Parliament. One key addition to his party was the MNA, Mubarak Zia, who joined PML-

N after being influenced by Amir Muqam's leadership.

Moreover, former ANP leader Zahid Khan also joined PML-N under Amir Muqam's leadership, further boosting the political strength of the party. Other prominent leaders from Peshawar, such as Tariq Awan, Malik Nadeem, Sher Rehman, Imran Afridi, and Haji Shaji Gul, also joined the party, solidifying PML-N's influence and adding to its growth.

Amir Muqam's dedication and sacrifices are bound to bear fruit in the near future. Under his leadership, the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will find themselves on the path to new development. His relentless efforts and sacrifices will yield positive results for the province in the coming years. Inshallah, Amir Muqam's journey will

eventually lead him to become the Chief Minister of the province, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will progress along the lines of Punjab, which has set an example of development under its Chief Minister.

Engineer Amir Muqam's political strategy and leadership have breathed new life into PML-N in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. His sacrifices and tireless efforts are not only a beacon of hope for the people of the province but will also contribute significantly to the building of a strong political system in the country. Under his guidance, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is set to become a progressive, prosperous, and resilient province, paving the way for a bright and developed future.



In brief

Two killed by lightning F.P. Report

KHAR: A man and his nephew were killed when struck by lightning in Salarzai tehsil of Bajaur district, Rescue 1122 informed on Monday. Both the uncle and nephew had taken their cattle to a nearby mountain in Salarzai when lightning struck them, killing them both on-the-spot. The dead were identified as Ismail, son of Sahib and Hamza, son of Haroon. The Rescue 1122 staff faced hardship in reaching the site of the incident as heavy rain, thunder and hailstorm started in the area.

Advisor visits Handu F.P. Report

HANGU: Advisor to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Communication and Works (C&W) Sohail Afridi has announced tendering for the construction of Hangu Main Road by December this year. MNA Yusuf Khan also accompanied the Advisor on this occasion. Talking to the media personnel on this occasion, Advisor C&W said that the federal government is treating Khyber Pakhtunkhwa like a stepmother due to the malice of Imran and the malice of PTI. It is not giving the province its due rights and funds. However, despite this, the government will solve the public problems within the available limited resources. He added that most of our projects were stopped during the 2-year rule of PDM. Now our focus is to complete the ongoing incomplete development works, he maintained. He further said that Hangu to Sarozai road will be constructed on priority basis as this Road is the main Highway connecting Pakistan and Afghanistan. Due to unavoidable circumstances, work could not start on this important highway till now, he regretted. The Advisor said that there are special instructions from the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to solve the problems of the southern districts on priorities. The provincial advisor along with the MNA Yousaf Khan also inspected the road up to Kachha Pakha and assured to start work on the said road as soon as possible.

Declaration welcomed F.P. Report

BUNER: The president Frontier Mines Owners association Sherbandi Khan Marwat has said that granting the status of industries to the minerals sector is a great success. He shared the good news for mines owners community here during media talks, on Monday. The federal government has continued to give the status of industries to the minerals sector, all this credit goes to Al-Pakistan Mines and Minerals Association, a joint organization of all provinces, he added. It should be remembered that the Frontier Mine Owners Association Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had demanded the provincial government to give the status of industries to the mineral sector during the preparation of the KP mineral policy draft in Peshawar in 2014, on which continuous efforts were being made, he elaborated. When Al-Pakistan Mines and Minerals Association was founded in 2019, at that time the presidents of Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan jointly presented the same agenda under the chairmanship of the central chairman of APMMA, Mir Bharoz, who included it in the first agenda, he claimed.



QUETTA: A worker of Quetta Electric Supply Company repairing transformer at Adalat Road.

Traders stress for action against illicit trade

F.P. Report

MARDAN: A high-profile advocacy event organized by the ACT Alliance convened a broad spectrum of political leaders, policy-makers and key stakeholders to address the growing economic challenges caused by illicit trade, tax evasion, smuggling and counterfeiting in Pakistan. The event, which brought together top leaders from various political and business sectors, underscored the urgent need for coordinated government action to tackle these threats, which are estimated to cost Pakistan's economy up to \$100 billion annually. The gathering saw the participation of influential figures, including Muhammad Zubair, Mayor of Peshawar; Bahr Ullah, Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami; Zulqarnain, President of the Pakistan Chamber of Commerce; Farhad Khan, President of ANP; Malik Liaqat, Minister for Population and Mehr un Nisa, former Member of Provincial Assembly (MPA). During his opening remarks, Muhammad Zubair, the Mayor of Peshawar expressed deep concern over the scale of illicit trade and its devastating effect on the local and national economy. "The insights shared today have

shown us the staggering losses our province and country face due to illicit trade. This is a wake-up call for all of us to take immediate and collective action," he stated, urging both provincial and federal authorities to collaborate closely with industry leaders to address the issue.

Mubashir Akram, the National Convener of ACT Alliance gave a comprehensive presentation on the gravity of the situation. He revealed that sectors such as retail, petroleum (POL), real estate, and tobacco are among the primary contributors to tax evasion and illicit activities in Pakistan. According to Akram, these illegal practices not only drain the national treasury but also distort the market, harming legitimate businesses and public services. "We are talking about a loss of \$100 billion every year due to tax evasion, smuggling, and counterfeiting. This amount could be used to improve infrastructure, education, healthcare, and social welfare for the people of Pakistan," Akram stressed.

Bahr Ullah, the Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami spoke passionately about the socio-economic repercussions of illicit trade. He argued that these activities, often dismissed as affecting only the wealthy, have far-reaching

consequences for ordinary citizens. "The damage from illicit trade is not limited to the wealthy or large corporations. It impacts everyone by eroding our economy, weakening public services and denying future generations the opportunities they deserve," he said. He called for collective social and political action to address the issue.

Zulqarnain, the President of the Pakistan Chamber of Commerce also stressed the need for focused efforts to combat counterfeiting and smuggling, particularly in the retail sector. He pointed out that businesses that play by the rules are increasingly being undermined by those who evade taxes or sell counterfeit goods. "Illicit activities are suffocating legitimate businesses and creating an uneven playing field. This must end," Zulqarnain asserted.

Farhad Khan, the President of the Awami National Party (ANP), highlighted the crucial role of the provincial government in leading the charge against illicit trade and related criminal networks. "As elected representatives, we have a responsibility to ensure that our policies reflect the seriousness of this issue," he said, calling for a more robust collaboration between provincial and federal agencies.

Provision of medicines to DHQ Hafizabad directed F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Provincial Minister Punjab Khawaja Imran Nazir took notice of shortage of medicines in District Head Quarter Hospital Hafizabad. Minister reached to DHQ hospital to review deficiencies of medicines and to ensure availability of free of cost medicines to patients in the hospital whereas he directed the health officers to provide all necessary medicines to diabetes, heart and kidney patients immediately.

Minister inspected emergency, medical, surgical wads, pharmacy, dialysis unit, laboratory and other departments of the hospital and took feedback from patients about availability of treatment facilities. Former Federal Minister Saira Afzal Tarar, MPA Mian Shahid Hussain, Deputy Commissioner Abdul Razzaq, Chief Executive Officer Health Dr. Umer Sharif and other officers were also accompanied by minister.

Provincial Health Minister Khawaja Imran Nazir said on this occasion that Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif is committed to ensure provision of latest medical facilities to the people of the province including Hafizabad. He said that the Punjab government was taking all possible measure to provide treatment facilities to the people at their doorsteps.

On the request of Sair Afzal Tarar, the minister assured to provide angiography facility and medicines to heart patients at district head quarter hospital Hafizabad. He also directed the concerned officers to do audit of local purchase of medicines during last three month.

During the visit of Surgery, Urology wards and positive feedback of patients, the minister lauded services of Dr. Zahoor Ahmad and announced to give commendation certificate to him for showing the best performance. The Minister also assured to construct sperate rooms for dialysis patients at Rural Health Centre Sukheki Mandi.

4 abductees reach homes in Bannu

F.P. Report

BANNU: Almost four abductees of Mamish Khel tribe who were apprehended last day over the road tax dispute have been reached home, on Monday. We are grateful for the full support of the civil society organizations, we will make all kinds of sacrifices for the national unity and agreement.

This was claimed by Malik Nazir Khan while talking to the media after the jirga and said that last day, the Grubs tribe had taken four people belonging to Mamish Khel, on which the leaders of Mamish Khel asked the nations to participate in the protest. A protest sit-in and block the Main Miranshah road for the recovery of the hostages.

In this regard, the reservations of our national leaders with the district administration will be

maintained. In this regard, they will play their role in every forum to solve all the problems of the nation and I would like to thank them for their full support of the national Jirga and businessmen. The former candidate of the provincial assembly, Syed Jafar Shah, said that as a result of the unity and agreement of the nation, four of our people have returned. Inshallah, they will be there for the rights of the nation till the last drop of blood and in raising the turban of Mamish Khel at every place. Will not feel any shame.

PKMAP to hold jirgas in districts: Pashtun Khwaja Milli Awami Party has decided to hold a Pashtun Jirga in every district of the province to stop the wave of unrest and to inform the nation about the 26th Amendment. Declaration of peaceful struggle for rights according to democratic and Pashtun tradi-

tion. They also unanimous decision to reorganize party and student's organization at the district level.

These views were expressed by the provincial leadership and executive committee meeting of Pashtun Khwaja Milli Awami Party was held under the chairmanship of senior provincial secretary Arshad Khan Advocate. In the general peace and order situation of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province was declared unsatisfactory, in this regard, it was announced to organize Pashtun National Jirga in the northern and southern districts of the province. Addressing the meeting, a unanimous resolution was also passed to keep the provincial general secretary Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party, Malik Haroon Khan Advocate, said that the people of KP are stuck in the current worst and difficult situation.

Elected general councilors swear in

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: A swearing-in ceremony of the general councilors who won the local government by-election, was held here at ADC Office Jirga Hall, Blombat on Monday. Returning Officer/Deputy Commissioner Dir lower Muhammad Arif Khan administered the oath to the elected councilors and congratulated them.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Bashir Khan, District Election Commissioner Jamshed Khan, Rating Officer/Additional Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Tariq Khan, representatives of the political parties participated in the ring-in ceremony.

The Deputy Commissioner directed the elected representatives to serve the people of their areas without discrimination. The district administration will provide all possible support in public services. On this occasion, the elected repre-

sentatives pledged that they would serve their people and region with passion and dedication.

Tajik tribe to open office in Islamabad: The Tajik Milli Itehad Pakistan (TMIP), an organization representing Tajik tribes of Pukhtun, on Monday arranged a function in connection with its golden jubilee celebrations at a local wedding hall near Timergara.

The Tajiks from Baluchistan, Afghanistan, Swat, Malakand, Chitral, Bajaur, Lower Dir and Upper Dir attended the function which was addressed by the TMIP chief Sardar Munir Ahmad, central president Sardar Javed Akhtar Tajik, chairman Ihsanul Haq Tajik, provincial president Muhammad Shaer Tajik, district president Nawab Ali Tajik, district education officer Inayatullah, PTI tehsil president Iqbal Ahmad Tajik, Hassan Murad Chitrali and journalist Riaz Shahid Tajik.

The speakers highlighted the history, achievements and

characteristics of the Tajik tribe. Some of the speakers claimed that Imam Abu Hanifa, Sulman Farsi, Shahab Ghauri and Sheikh Saadi like personalities belonged to the Tajik tribe. They said that Tajik had ruled over Afghanistan and India for nearly 300 years. The speakers said that Tajiks were peace loving and loyal citizens.

They said the tribesmen would play their active role in defending the frontiers of Pakistan and would continue its efforts to resolve conflicts among different tribes of Pukhtun through jirga. The chief of Tajik Munir Ahmad announced to donate an ambulance vehicle and set up the TMIP central office in Islamabad.

Road project inaugurated: The Pakistan Tahreek Insaaf coordinator for PK 16 Malik Kashif Kamal, the son of MPA Malik Shafiqullah has said the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government will spend Rs 17.5 million on reconstruction and extension of Talash Bajuro road.

BISP beneficiaries facing multiple hurdles

F.P. Report

WANA: The beneficiaries of the Ehsaas Kafalat Program and Benazir Income Support Program are grappling with growing obstacles as financial aid distribution faces significant delays and blockages. Numerous affected individuals, reaching out to media representatives, reported that their aid had previously been halted simply because they held passports a status often mistakenly associated with privilege.

Beneficiaries explained that in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's newly merged tribal districts, it is common for members of low-income households to

obtain passports as a necessity for overseas employment, not a luxury. Despite this, aid distribution policies seem to label passport holders as affluent, overlooking the financial hardship faced by these families.

Further complicating their plight, a critical PKR 10,500 monthly assistance meant for vulnerable families under the Ehsaas Kafalat Program has also been suspended due to alleged dues from the Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL). Beneficiaries argue that the PTCL network has remained non-functional in much of South Waziristan since the post-9/11 wave of instability,

with no telecom facilities accessible to residents. Yet, PTCL dues have reportedly been applied to their ID cards, with no connections ever installed in the area. Affected families question how they can be expected to cover these dues for a service they have never used.

As financial strains grow, these distressed beneficiaries have made an urgent appeal to government officials and relevant authorities, urging them to investigate and remove these obstacles. They call for the immediate restoration of their financial aid to support basic household needs, underscoring the hardships caused by the suspension.

Youth Development Center kicks off operations at KUST

Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Kohat University of Science and Technology's (KUST) Youth Development Center (YDC) has officially commenced operations following its inauguration by Meena Khan Afridi, Provincial Minister for Higher Education KPK, and the Vice Chancellor of KUST Dr. Muhammad Naseer U Din, on Monday.

Professor Dr. Muhammad Kaleem, the focal person, and Gul Nawaz, Manager of YDC, shared that the center aims

to provide students with essential awareness about education, skills, future careers, and a conducive environment to foster growth.

Vice chancellor said, this initiative is expected to play a vital role in shaping the university's students into well-rounded individuals. He added, under the YDC project, students can look forward to various programs and activities focused on education and Career Development, Enhancing students, understanding of various academic and professional pathways.

Skill Building, equipping students with essential skills to excel in their chosen fields. Future careers, preparing students for emerging trends and opportunities in the job market. Fruitful Environment, creating a supportive and inclusive atmosphere that encourages students to thrive. Manager YDC Gul Nawaz said by offering these resources, KUST's YDC is poised to make a significant impact on the lives of its students, empowering them to become active contributors to society.

Winter wonderland: Snowfall lovers flock to Swat

MALAM JABBA (APP): Known as Switzerland of Pakistan, Swat has started attracting an influx of tourists and adventure sports enthusiasts alongwith families to enjoy the first snowfall of the winter season. In the wake of Met Office's report of rains and snowfalls over the hills in upper parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including Swat, Dir, Chitral, Abbottabad and Mansehra on Monday, the snowfall lovers from across the country especially Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa thronged to Kalam, Bahrain and Malam Jabba.

The tourists have enjoyed light snowfall at upper Kalam and Malam Jabba amid great fun and laughter. Besides Kalam and Malam Jabba, the snowy mountains peaks of Gabin Jabba, Miandam, Matiltan, Kalam, Utror, Gabral, Matiltan, Mahodand, Loye Sar resorts drew influx of snowfall lovers along with families and children. "I love snowfall. I came from Peshawar to my favorite tourists' destination Swat for snowfall following MET's office forecast besides enjoying its brown trout fish at reasonable rate," said Fayaz Khan, a retired school teacher while taking to APP.

Advising tourists to bring warm clothes, he said the cold breeze has increased chill in Upper Swat forcing tourists to wear additional cloths and wollen sweaters. Tourists from Peshawar, Nowshera, Mardan, Charsadda, Lahore, Rawalpindi and Islamabad were seen in large numbers at Kalam, Malam Jabba and Bahrian on Sunday to get pleasures from snowfall, trout fish and river rafting on the weekend. Known for a combination of its seven distinctive features including snowfall that was hard to find together in any tourist destination of Pakistan, Swat is also a home to primitive Gandhara civilization and ice skiing at Malam Jabba.

Besides river rafting, adventure sports, snow-clad mountain peaks and trout-fish, he said Swat motorway has made it an ideal destination for winter tourism and sports in Pakistan. "I have visited many countries but could not find such a distinctive features together found in Swat" said Manzoorul Haq, former Ambassador while taking to APP. He said the 150-kilometers long freshwater of the river Swat originating from different glaciers and lakes including

Mahodand and Gabral mountains offers unique opportunities for adventure sports enthusiasts to explore in a single day trip along with loved ones.

Fazagut, Fatehpur, Barikot, and Chakdara were most suitable for water rafting in river Swat and if developed on modern lines could attract a large number of tourists during winter. Ambassador Manzoor said River Swat was ideal for 'fish jumping and disappearing water sports' and introduction of such sports would help bolster the rural economy, promote tourism and transport industries in KP. Bestowed with more than 50 high-altitude small and big lakes, Swat's Mahodand lake is an exceptional source of attraction for tourists enjoying its blue- waters and boats riding amid cold breezes and snowfalls.

Nasir Khan, a property dealer of Wapda Town, told APP that he came from Nowshera to enjoy snowfall in Kalam, trout fish of River Swat and Mahudhand lake. He said Mahudand and Gabriel lakes carried unique charm and clean air besides nearby birds chanting valleys take tourists into a lap of serenity. "I have ordered 2 KG trout fish to enjoy with my fam-

ily members," he said, adding green trout of Swat attract foodies at Kalam, Madain and other areas of the district.

Besides its famous Deodar trees and precious wildlife, he said the Swat's snow-clad tall mountain ranges of Falakser, Mankial and Elum peaks offer great challenges to mountaineers and trekkers to explore especially during winter. Likewise, its extensive plains and orchards that bear fruits and vegetables carried a unique comparative advantage than other tourists destination of the country.

Attracting Buddhists, monks and archaeologists from across the world throughout the year, he said the Swat's archaeological treasures and ancient artifacts housed at Saidu Sharif Museum become a distinctive feature taking tourists to the glorious history of Swat. Archealogists and tourists visited different Buddhist sites of Swat including Saidu Sharif Museum and Stupa besides Buthkara Buddhist monastery which impressed them a lot.

Ambassador Manzoor said Swat was very important in terms of Buddhist history in Pakistan and must be visited by followers of Bhuddism from all around the world. "Another

striking feature of Swat is skiing sports being played at Malam Jabba every year during winter and such sport was hardly placed in any part of the country."

KP tourism department officials told APP that a mega project was prepared for organizing different winter sports and tourism events in various districts including Swat. Kalam's winter gala and tour-de-cycle race would be organized in Swat while first-ever sports rafting at River Swat to be held besides paragliding event.

To reduce tourists' load at Kalam, Malam Jabba and Bahrian, new tourists spots would be developed at Sola Tanar, Puchar and Jargo valleys while walking tracks to promote ecotourism in Swat. To maintain natural beauty and avoid pollution at tourist spots in Swat, he said camping pods would be established at new tourists' destinations besides Kalash culture events in Chitral. To link new tourist destination with Swat Motorway, he said that huge amount were being spent on development and construction of new roads.

Work on the world bank's assisted KP Integrated Tourism Project was underway in the province to promote tourism, he

added. The construction of 15 jeepable tracks was also proposed in Malakand and Hazara divisions while six tourist facilitation centers established and work on seven others started. The ground breaking of 23 km long Mankyal-Bada Sarai Road has been performed for rehabilitation.

The project also includes the construction of four bridges and two rest areas. He said that an Integrated Tourism Zone at Mankyal Swat would be established where modern facilities would be provided to tourists under the KITE project. He said a mega project for feasibility studies for identification of new tourist spots was planned. To promote ecotourism in southern districts of KP.

A road to Sheikh Badin tourist resort located at the confluence of DI Khan and Lakki Marwat districts would be constructed while a tourist wing for merged areas was established to monitor and oversee tourism-related activities there. Tourism police was made operational at Malakand and Hazara divisions to facilitate tourists. He said Tourism police were deployed on key places of Swat to facilitate tourists and snowfall lovers during winter season.



HAVANA: Residents cycle past homes damaged when Hurricane Rafael passed through Batabano, Cuba.

Democrats' bet on a generation of liberal voters has backfired badly

WASHINGTON (BBC): Donald Trump swept to victory by chipping away at groups of voters which Democrats once believed would help them win the White House for a generation. After Barack Obama's victory in 2008, many triumphantly claimed that the liberal voting coalition which had elected the first black president was growing more powerful, as the makeup of America changed.

Older, white conservatives were reducing in number, and non-white Americans were projected to be in the majority by 2044. College-educated professionals, younger people, black Americans, Latinos and other ethnic minorities, and blue-collar workers were part of a "coalition of the ascendant". These voters were left-leaning on cultural issues and supportive of an active federal government and a strong social safety net. And they constituted a majority in enough states to ensure a Democratic lock on the Electoral College - and the presidency. "Demography," these left-wing optimists liked to say, "is destiny." Sixteen years later, however, that destiny appears to have turned to dust. Cracks began forming when non-college educated voters slipped away from the Democrats in midterm elections in 2010 and 2014. They then broke en masse to Trump in 2016. While Joe Biden, with his working-class-friendly reputation built over half a century, won enough back to take the White House in 2020, his success proved to be only a temporary reprieve.

This year, Trump supplemented his gains with the blue-collar workers by also cutting into the Democratic margins among young, Latino and black voters. He has carved up the coalition of the ascendant. Speaking

after his comeback victory, Trump celebrated his own diverse coalition of voters. "I started to see realignment could happen because the Democrats are not in line with the thinking of the country," the president-elect told NBC News. Trump did it with a hard-line message on immigration that included border enforcement and mass deportations - policies that Biden and the Democrats recoiled from when they took power back from Trump in 2021, lest they anger immigrant rights activists in their liberal base. Illegal border crossings reached record levels under the Biden administration, with more than eight million encounters with migrants at the border with Mexico. "If you watch a video from Hillary Clinton back in 2008 in the primaries, she talks about making sure there's wall-building, making sure that immigrants who violate the law get deported, making sure everybody learns English," said Kevin Marino Cabrera, a Republican commissioner in Miami-Dade County. "It's funny how far to the left [the Democrats] have gone." This week, Trump became the first Republican since 1988 to win that heavily Latino county in Florida. He also won Starr County in south Texas, with its 97% Latino population, with 57% of the vote. In 2008, only 15% of the county voted for McCain, the Republican. Mike Madrid, an anti-Trump Republican strategist who specialises in Latino voting trends, told the BBC that the problem with "demography is destiny" was that it risked treating all non-white Americans as an "aggrieved racial minority". "But that is not and nor has it ever been the way Latinos have viewed themselves," he added. "I hate that if you're black,

you've got to be a Democrat or you hate black people and you hate your community," Kenard Holmes, a 20-year-old student in South Carolina, told the BBC during the presidential primaries earlier this year. He said he agreed with Republicans on some things and felt Democratic politicians took black voters for granted. With some states still tabulating their results, Trump currently has improved on his electoral margins in at least 2,367 US counties, while slipping in just 240. It wasn't just the number of counties that Trump won that made a difference, either. Kamala Harris needed to post significant margins in the cities to offset Republican strength in rural areas. She consistently fell short. In Detroit's Wayne County, for example, which the latest US Census reports is 38% black, Harris won 63% of the vote - significantly lower than Joe Biden's 68% in 2020 and Obama's 74% in 2008. Polls consistently suggested that the economy, along with immigration, were the two issues of highest importance to voters - and where polls indicated Trump had an advantage over Harris. His economic message cut across racial divides.

"We're just sick of hearing about identity politics," said Nicole Williams, a white bartender with a black husband and biracial children in Las Vegas, Nevada - one of the key battleground states that Trump flipped this year. "We're just American, and we just want what's best for Americans," she said. Democrats are already engaged in considerable soul-searching, as they come to grips with an election defeat that has delivered the White House, the Senate and, perhaps, the House of Representatives to Republican control.

Haiti's transitional council moves to replace PM in contentious move

PORT-AU-PRINCE (AFP): A transitional council tasked with re-establishing democratic order in Haiti has signed a decree sacking interim Prime Minister Garry Conille, in a contentious move that highlights deepening political turmoil in the Caribbean nation. The decree, seen by The Associated Press, Reuters and AFP news agencies and set to be published on Monday, sets out to replace Conille with Alix Didier Fils-Aime, a businessman previously considered for the job.

The nine-member council, which was formed in April to try to help Haiti chart a path forward amid surging gang violence and years of instability, appointed Conille as prime minister in May. But the council has been plagued by infighting and has long been at loggerheads with

the prime minister, a long-time civil servant who previously worked with the United Nations.

The Miami Herald reported that Conille and Leslie Voltaire, who leads the council, are at odds over a cabinet reshuffling and the removal of three council members named in a bribery scandal. Last month, anticorruption investigators accused those three council members of demanding \$750,000 in bribes from a government bank director to secure his job. The report was a significant blow to the council and is expected to further erode public trust in it. The three members accused of bribery - Smith Augustin, Emmanuel Vertilaire and Louis Gerald Gilles - were among those to sign decree. Only one member of the council, Edgard Leblanc Fils, did not sign the order.

Still, there are "divergent views" on whether the transitional council - whose members represent various political and civil society groups - has the power to remove Conille, the Miami Herald reported. "Constitutionally, only the Haitian Parliament can fire a prime minister, and presidents in the past have done so through political maneuvering by getting supporters in one of the two chambers of government," the newspaper explained.

"Haiti, however, is in the throes of a constitutional crisis where there is no Parliament and no democratically elected leader in the entire country," The political turmoil comes as Haiti continues to reel from widespread gang violence, with armed groups exerting control over 80 percent of the capital, Port-au-Prince. Reporting from

Washington, DC, Al Jazeera's John Holman noted that a multinational, UN-backed policing mission in Haiti - deployed earlier this year and led by Kenya - "doesn't seem to have made a dent" in the power of the armed groups.

The gangs routinely use murder, kidnappings and sexual violence in their fight for control of territory across Port-au-Prince and other parts of the country. "It seems that the gangs are as powerful as ever right now," Holman said. Last month, the UN warned that nearly half of all Haitians - some 5.41 million people - were experiencing acute food insecurity as a result of the violence. More than 700,000 people, more than half of whom are children, have been displaced from their homes, according to the International Organization for Migration.

Earthquake rocks Cuba as residents struggle to recover from recent storms

HAVANA (Reuters): A powerful earthquake has hit eastern Cuba, adding more problems to a country still reeling from a series of recent storms and blackouts. The United States Geological Survey (USGS) reported that a magnitude 6.8 earthquake hit about 40km (25 miles) south of the town of Bartolome Maso. No deaths or injuries have been reported so far.

"There have been landslides, damage to homes and power lines," Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel said in a social media post, adding that the areas of Santiago de Cuba and Granma were affected. "We are beginning to assess the damage in order to begin

recovery. The first and most important thing is to save lives," he said. People in affected provinces have said the earthquake was one of the most powerful they have felt in their lives - no small feat in an area that the USGS says has experienced 23 earthquakes of magnitude 5 and above in the last 50 years.

"We've felt earthquakes in the past, but nothing like this," Santiago resident Griselda Fernandez told the Reuters news agency. Other residents in Santiago, Cuba's second-largest city, reported that the quake caused buildings to shake and that many people were still standing nervously in their doorways. "You had to

see how everything was moving, the walls, everything," Yolanda Tabio, a 76-year-old in the city, told The Associated Press.

Many of the region's homes and buildings are older and vulnerable to earthquake damage. State-run media published images of terracotta roofs and facades of concrete block homes that had collapsed with the shake. Many images showed structural damage to ceilings, walls, windows columns as well as to public infrastructure. The USGS said that nearby countries such as Jamaica also felt some effects.

The tremor is the latest in a series of natural disas-

ters that have compounded existing infrastructure problems in Cuba, where large swaths of the population also face economic insecurity. In October, Hurricane Oscar brought heavy rains and widespread power outages to the island and left at least six people dead after making landfall in eastern Cuba. Another storm, Hurricane Rafael, knocked out power for at least 10 million people after slamming into the eastern part of the island last week. The storm uprooted trees and knocked down telephone poles. Hundreds of buildings were destroyed and hundreds of thousands of people were displaced.

Canada records its first human bird flu case

OTTAWA: Canada has confirmed its first human case of bird flu after a teenager tested positive for the virus, according to health authorities. The teenager, from the western province of British Columbia, is believed to have caught the H5 avian flu from a bird or animal, said a statement by the province. The infected person is undergoing treatment at a children's hospital.

The province said it was tracing the teenager's contacts to pinpoint the source of the contagion.

"This is a rare event," British Columbia Health Officer Bonnie Henry said in a statement. "We are conducting a thorough investigation to fully understand the source of exposure here in BC." Canada's Health Minister Mark Holland assured members of the public that the risk to them remains low. H5 bird flu is widespread in wild birds worldwide and is causing outbreaks in poultry and United States dairy cows, with several recent human cases among US dairy and poultry workers. The virus is also suspected of killing dozens of captive tigers and other zoo animals in Vietnam. There has been no evidence of person-to-person spread so far. But if that were to happen, a pandemic could unfold, scientists have warned. Earlier in November, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) asked that farm workers who have been exposed to animals with bird flu be tested for the virus even if they do not have symptoms. Bird flu has infected nearly 450 dairy farms in 15 US states since March, and the CDC has identified 46 human cases of bird flu since April.

In Canada, British Columbia has identified at least 22 infected poultry farms since October, and numerous wild birds tested positive, according to the province. Canada has had no cases reported in dairy cattle and no evidence of bird flu in samples of milk. In the decades since H5 has been found in humans, there have been rare cases where an animal source cannot be identified. — Aljazeera

Irish man arrested

BUDAPEST (BBC): A 37-year-old Irish man has been arrested in connection with the murder of an American nurse in Hungary, police say. Mackenzie Michalski, 31, from Portland, Oregon, was reported missing after a night out in Hungary's capital, Budapest.

Officers said the suspect was identified through CCTV footage and later confessed to killing Ms Michalski, but claimed her death had been an accident. In a statement, put out, police said the man had attempted to conceal Ms Michalski's death by renting a car, putting her body in a suitcase and hiding it in woodland near the village of Sziliget in the country's west. Officers said Ms Michalski was killed during an "intimate encounter" with the suspect, but did not provide any further details. They were able to establish that the pair had met at a nightclub, danced together and then travelled to the man's rented apartment.

He was arrested there, and has been remanded in custody. After being questioned, the suspect showed detectives where he had disposed of Ms Michalski's body, the police statement said. It added that the man had placed the nurse's body in a wardrobe while he cleaned his apartment - in a bid to "remove traces" of the alleged murder - before driving to the woods. Ms Michalski was reported missing by friends when she failed to return to their accommodation. During the course of their investigation, police said they uncovered evidence which "gave rise to the suspicion of murder".

Following Ms Michalski's disappearance, the man made a series of online searches - including "what does a dead body smell like after it decomposes?", "how do the police handle missing person cases?", and "removing rotting meat smell".

Putin offers African countries Russia's 'total support'

MOSCOW (BBC): Russian President Vladimir Putin has offered what he called "total support" for Africa, including in the struggle against terrorism and extremism. The speech was read out at a summit in the Black Sea resort of Sochi by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov to his African counterparts.

Several African governments have cut ties with traditional Western allies and are looking to Moscow for help in tackling frequent attacks by jihadists. During the summit, Burkina Faso's Foreign Minister Karamoko Jean-Marie Traore said Russia was a more suitable international partner than the former colonial power, France.

It is a view shared by several of France's former colonies - and was reiterated by Mali's Foreign Minister Abdoulaye Diop, who contrasted the Kremlin's "sincere" partnership to the "neo-colonial" relationship of Western powers. He said that as well as military co-operation, Mali was exploring other joint projects in the energy, telecommunications, technology and mining sectors. "Russian companies are working in all these areas with the Malian government and [private] partners in Mali to provide solutions to the challenges facing the Malian people. The two parties have agreed to step up the pace to ensure rapid results," he said on the second and final day of the conference of African foreign ministers. Wagner mercenary fighters - now rebranded under the

Africa Corps banner by Russia's defence ministry - were the preferred choice for the military leaders who ordered French and UN troops to leave. Russia's help, often in exchange for access to raw materials, also comes with a promise that there will be no meddling in a country's internal affairs or lessons on how to run an election. However, Russia's military expeditions to Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger have helped protect the junta leaders there, but have failed to make much progress in the fight against Islamist militants. Nonetheless, the Kremlin is trumpeting about these new-found friends, with foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova saying the conference had dashed Western hopes for Russia's isolation.

And Lavrov said Russia's relations with Africa were strengthening "more and more" with progress "on all axes". Putin's speech underlined this point. "I would like to reiterate that our country will continue to provide total support to our African friends in different sectors: ensuring sustainable development, the struggle against terrorism and extremism, combating epidemics, food problems and the consequences of natural disasters," it said. Emanuela Del Re, the EU special representative for the Sahel region of West Africa, told the BBC the West needed to accept the shifting sands of allegiances.

While Russia was "certainly a very malicious

actor", the Italian diplomat explained it had a strong bond with Africa going back to before independence and was not alone in its interest in the Sahel. "It's largely a desert but in reality the region is very crowded: because at the moment you see Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran... all member states of the EU and the UK," she said. In fact, African leaders were pragmatic about their need to "diversify their partnerships", Ms Del Re said, adding it was not a time for the EU to abandon what she called the "three difficult countries" of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, which have all experienced coups in recent years. Her point was that it should not be seen as a competition. Rwanda, which has strong ties with the UK and the West, is one of several African countries that have already signed deals with Moscow to get help building a nuclear power plant. Rwandan Foreign Minister Olivier Nduhungerehe, who is also in Sochi, told the AFP news agency hundreds of Rwandan students had graduated from Russian universities, including "those who specialise in nuclear science".

"We hope to be able to train a certain number of scientific managers specialising in this field," he added. Five years ago, Putin promised to double trade with Africa - this has not happened. But using other means, which the West sees as destabilising the continent, Russia's influence has grown significantly.

Is this tiny Mauritian island a confidential spy station?

LONDON (BBC): Arnaud Poulay never wanted to leave the tiny Indian Ocean island of Agalega, but this year he packed his bag and took off, broken-hearted by what he regards as the militarisation of his home. Until recently, just 350 people lived on Agalega, fishing and growing coconuts. Other food was delivered four times a year by ship from the capital of Mauritius, 1,100km (680 miles) to the south. A small airstrip was rarely used except in medical emergencies.

But in 2015, Mauritius, an island nation of which Agalega is a part, signed a deal enabling India to build a vast 3,000m runway and a big new jetty there, as part of the two countries' deepening collaboration on maritime security. However some Agalegians fear this could grow into a fully-fledged military presence. Mr Poulay, a 44-year-old handyman and reggae musician, led a campaign against the project. "I love my island and my island loves me," he says. "But when that base was unveiled, I knew I had to leave." Agalega - two small islands covering 25 sq km, in the south-west Indian Ocean - would be an ideal location for India to monitor marine traffic. And a comparison of satellite images from 2019 with oth-

ers taken in July this year shows how much has changed. A carpet of palm trees has made way for the runway, which stretches along the spine of the north island between the two main villages - La Fourche in the north and Vingt-Cinq further south. Two 60m-wide buildings can be seen sitting on a tarmac apron, at least one of which could be a hangar to accommodate the Indian navy's P-8I aircraft, according to Samuel Bashfield, a PhD scholar at the Australian National University. The P-8I is a Boeing 737 modified to hunt and potentially attack submarines, and to monitor maritime communications. Islanders have already photographed the aircraft on the airstrip.

To the north-west is the new jetty jutting out into the ocean, which Mr Bashfield says could be used by Indian surface patrol vessels, as well as the ship that brings supplies to Agalega. "As newer satellite images become available, we'll better understand Agalega's role in Indian Ocean communications," he says. The International Institute for Strategic Studies refers to the facility as a "surveillance station" and says it is likely to contain a coastal radar surveillance system similar to Indian-built equipment elsewhere in Mauritius. The Indian gov-

ernment declined to answer questions about Agalega, and referred the BBC to earlier statements on its website. In one of these, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said India and Mauritius were "natural partners" in maritime security, facing traditional and non-traditional challenges in the Indian Ocean region. The two countries have had a close defence relationship since the 1970s. The country's national security adviser, its coastguard chief and the head of the police helicopter squadron are all Indian nationals and officers in India's external intelligence agency, navy and air force, respectively.

Both sides would want the facility to be seen "as one that is more about capacity building than for any overt military use", says Prof Harsh Pant, of the India Institute at King's College London. It's no secret, though, that India and its Western allies are concerned about China's increasing presence in the Indian Ocean. While it's not unusual for a large country to establish a military outpost on the territory of a smaller ally, the construction work on Agalega has troubled some islanders. A number of areas, including some of the island's palm-fringed white-sand beaches, have already been cordoned off, islanders say.

Trump, Scholz discuss 'return to peace in Europe'

WASHINGTON: United States President-elect Donald Trump and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz have agreed to work for "a return to peace in Europe" in their first call since the US election, a German government spokesman has said. "Both exchanged views on the German-American relationship and the current geopolitical challenges," Scholz's spokesperson, Steffen Hebestreit, said in a statement.

"The chancellor underlined the government's willingness to continue the decades-long successful cooperation between the governments of both countries. They also agreed to work together towards a return to peace in Europe." Trump's return to the White House is being closely watched in Europe for how it might affect Russia's war

in Ukraine. Trump, who has criticised US President Joe Biden's support for Kyiv, has claimed that Russia would never have invaded Ukraine if he were president and that he would be able to end the conflict "in 24 hours".

The Washington Post reported that Trump had spoken to Russian President Vladimir Putin and pressed him not to escalate the war in Ukraine. During the call from Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida, Trump reminded Putin of Washington's considerable military presence in Europe, the Post reported, citing an unnamed person familiar with the matter. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy spoke with Trump in a call notably joined by tech billionaire Elon Musk, one of Trump's most powerful backers. Trump's call with Scholz

notably comes after the Republican spoke with several leaders of smaller European countries, including French President Emmanuel Macron, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen. During the US election campaign, Scholz, who is facing snap elections early next year following the collapse of his governing coalition, criticised Trump as divisive and openly expressed his preference for Biden. During Trump's first term in office, his administration's relations with Scholz's predecessor and coalition partner Angela Merkel were often strained. In office, Trump cast Berlin as a free-rider on the protection of the US military and announced plans to cut the number of US troops stationed in Germany by about one-quarter. — Aljazeera

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APEC leaders should join hands to ensure 'golden 30 years'

THE 31st APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting to be held in Lima on Saturday is undoubtedly the most important event of the ongoing APEC Economic Leaders' Week, which is being held in the Peruvian capital this week under the theme of "Empower, Include, Grow".

The meeting sets the stage for bilateral and multilateral discussions among the participating leaders to further liberalize trade among the regional economies. Such face-to-face meetings between major leaders can effectively help deepen mutual understanding, prompt consensus and manage differences.

So the expectations are high that such meetings will also feature at Saturday's gathering in Lima to help build consensus on the implementation of relevant pro-trade documents and newly adopted trade initiatives, among other things.

In the face of the world's largest economy's politicization of economic issues and attempts to restructure the global industry and supply chains to its liking, it remains a question whether the APEC mechanism can usher in another "golden 30 years" for the region.

Nonetheless, Saturday's meeting, which is intended to help "create greater prosperity for the people of the region by promoting balanced, inclusive, sustainable, innovative and secure growth and by accelerating regional economic integration", offers an opportunity for the participating leaders to try and temporarily put aside any differences they may have and focus on the economic and trade issues of common concern from the regional rather than a national perspective.

Thirty years ago, after the end of the Cold War, leaders in the Asia-Pacific region unanimously agreed to transcend the old thinking of group confrontation and to work together to deepen regional economic cooperation and integration, and commit to building a dynamic, harmonious and prosperous Asia-Pacific family.

That propelled the development of the Asia-Pacific and put economic globalization onto the fast track, helping the region become the world's economic growth center, the anchor for global stability, and the highland of cooperation. The Asia-Pacific now accounts for one-third of the world's population, more than 60 percent of the world's economy, and nearly half of the total global trade.

Whether or not the Asia-Pacific can enjoy another "golden 30 years" depends on whether the APEC members uphold the original aspirations of the mechanism, and push for a new start in Asia-Pacific cooperation.

Those participating in Saturday's meeting should bear in mind that openness and inclusiveness should be the main principles underlying regional cooperation, and promoting common development should be the overall goal.

They should thus seek to advance the process for the establishment of an Asia-Pacific free trade area, promote economic linkages and integration among the regional economies without any exclusion, and strengthen the connection between relevant regional economic and trade agreements and development strategies.

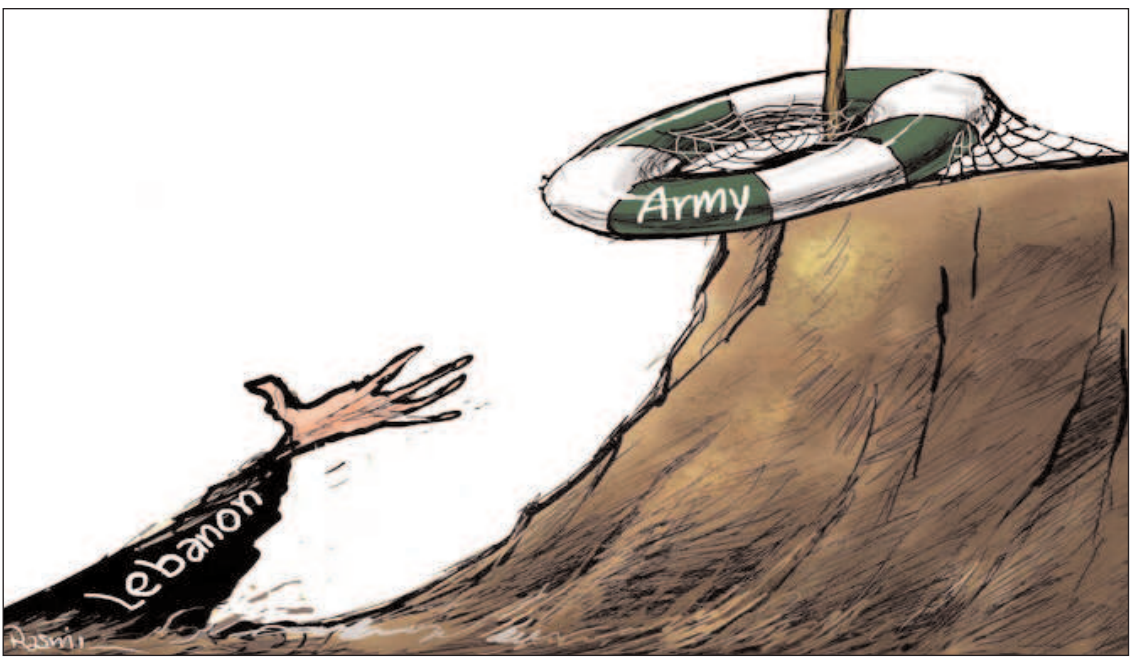
In particular, with a new technological revolution taking place, they should work together to improve global science and technology governance, strengthen support for technological innovation to promote the green transformation and sustainable development, and create an open, fair, just and nondiscriminatory environment for the development of science and technology.

China remains a staunch advocate and practitioner of Asia-Pacific cooperation. It hopes the regional economies will demonstrate the wisdom to maintain free and open trade and investment, and support and strengthen the inclusive regional trading system, rather than denying the achievements of the past 30 years by adopting a beggar-thy-neighbor approach to economic and development issues.

China is willing to work with all parties to comprehensively implement the APEC Putrajaya Vision 2040 and push for positive outcomes from this meeting, which it hopes will inject new impetus into regional economic integration and promote shared, balanced and sustainable growth. Beijing calls for parties in the Asia-Pacific to join hands and work together to build an Asia-Pacific community with a shared future.

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A new era of hope: Trump's return and the promise of stability

Khalaf Ahmad Al-Habtoor

THE reelection of President Donald Trump heralds a new era of optimism and possibility for both the US and the global community. His impending return to office signals a steadfast commitment to revitalizing the US economy and prioritizing the well-being of the American people. As a businessman with a proven track record, Trump brings a practical approach to governance, focusing on economic prosperity and tangible results.

During his previous term, Trump's policies spurred economic growth, reduced unemployment and created a favorable environment for businesses. His emphasis on deregulation and tax reforms breathed new life into various sectors, fostering investment and job creation. The American people can expect a continuation of these strategies, aimed at further strengthening the nation's economic foundation.

Beyond the economy, Trump has consistently championed traditional family values and has made it clear he intends to protect the youth from harmful ideologies. His stance against the "woke" movement demonstrates a commitment to safeguarding cultural values and shielding younger generations from agendas that threaten to erode societal foundations. This form of leadership is not only crucial for the US but also serves as an example for young people around the world.

On the international front, Trump's approach to foreign policy is characterized by a focus on peace and stability. His administration's success in brokering agreements in

the Middle East, such as the Abraham Accords, underscored his commitment to fostering dialogue and reducing tensions.

As the conflict between Ukraine and Russia continues to claim lives and create global instability, I am confident that Trump will leverage his diplomatic acumen to facilitate negotiations that could bring an end to this crisis.

Trump's commitment to addressing the Middle East's unique security challenges is clear. A renewed US-Gulf Cooperation Council partnership under his leadership would reinforce stability across the Gulf states. His strategic alliance with the GCC nations reflects a shared commitment to countering common threats and promoting regional security. UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan last week extended his congratulations to Trump and emphasized the importance of this collaboration by stating: "The UAE and US are united by our enduring partnership based on shared ambitions for progress."

The UAE looks forward to continuing to work with our partners in the US toward a future of opportunity, prosperity and stability for all."

In a Middle East where stability is paramount, Trump's focus on strengthening alliances and curbing extremist forces offers a path forward. His leadership is an encouraging sign for all those invested in a secure and prosperous future for the region.

Trump's foreign policy extends beyond the Middle

East, reaching key players in Asia. His diplomatic engagements with North Korea and China signaled a shift from military confrontations toward economic cooperation. His landmark meetings with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, though met with skepticism by some, opened channels of communication that had long been dormant, while his firm stance on trade imbalances with China sought to establish a more equitable economic relationship.

As Trump once said, "sometimes by losing a battle you find a new way to win the war." This sentiment captures the resilience and adaptability that characterize his approach to leadership — qualities that will undoubtedly serve him well in navigating both domestic and global complexities.

World leaders have expressed optimism regarding their renewed collaboration with Trump. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer praised Trump's "historic victory," highlighting the enduring UK-US alliance, while European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen reaffirmed the "true partnership" between the EU and the US, emphasizing a strong transatlantic agenda to address shared challenges during Trump's presidency.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, recognizing the significance of Trump's reelection, expressed hope for "strong bipartisan support for Ukraine in the United States."

His message reflects the optimism felt by nations

worldwide that Trump's leadership will contribute to a more peaceful and balanced international order.

Reflecting on my endorsement of Trump during his first campaign, I believed that his background as a businessman would bring a refreshing change to American politics. While some people, including celebrities, opposed him, it was crucial to set aside personal biases and offer him the chance to implement his vision. His subsequent achievements demonstrated the effectiveness of a pragmatic, business-oriented approach.

Today, with his reelection, we are presented with an opportunity for a brighter future. I urge all stakeholders to put personal differences aside and engage constructively, listening to the voices of the American people who have chosen this path.

As we look ahead, the alliance between Trump's incoming administration and the Gulf nations will be instrumental in countering the threats posed by those who seek to destabilize our region. With a renewed focus on economic and security cooperation, we can achieve a prosperous future that reflects the values we hold dear.

In conclusion, Trump's reelection is not just a victory for the US but a beacon of hope for the world. His leadership, grounded in practical experience and a results-oriented mindset, is poised to address both domestic and international challenges. As we move forward, let us seize this moment to build a future of stability, security and growth for all.

Biden can still save what remains of Gaza, and his sorry legacy

Andrew Mitrovica

AFTER they lose, retire, or get pushed out, politicians tend, it is said, to become preoccupied with their legacies.

This cliché may be true since — driven by hubris and narcissism — former presidents and prime ministers try to shape their legacies by penning self-serving biographies describing their triumphs [many] and failures [few] while exercising the singular powers and prerogatives of high office.

I'm not sure, to be frank, whether US President Joe Biden has the time to publish an air-brushed account of his unremarkable four-year tenure as commander-in-chief. But I believe that Biden, like anyone living out their twilight years, is apt to devote a moment or two to quiet reflection and, perhaps, introspection.

I think the seminal questions Biden is bound to be contemplating as he approaches his departure from the White House are familiar to many his age: What good have I done? How have I helped people who need help? How have I eased, as best I can, the suffering of others?

In the raw residue of the Democrats' drubbing by a resurgent Donald Trump, Biden's epitaph is largely being written by angry pundits and once-loyal allies turned finger-pointing detractors who fault him for that stinging defeat.

Biden, they insist, should have signalled much earlier his intention not to seek reelection and, as a result, allowed for an open primary where several candidates could have vied for the Democratic Party nomination.

A stronger standard-bearer may have emerged, or, at the least, Kamala Harris

would have been better able to establish her identity and presidential bona fides.

Instead, Biden's stubbornness and blindness sealed Harris's and, by extension, America's unhappy fate. They could be right. They could be wrong. I don't know. This, I do know. Biden has a fast-closing window to wrest the "narrative" over his sullied "legacy" from the legion of miffed commentators and turncoat friends lobbing recriminations and blame at him today.

Seizing this one last opportunity to make good on a blatant wrong will require will and determination — the kind of will and determination that Biden has, to date, not demonstrated. However slim and distant, there is always the hope, I suppose, that Biden will finally embrace the impulse to do the necessary and urgent thing and possibly end the genocide that is engulfing Gaza and the occupied West Bank with such grinding, relentless ferocity.

Every minute of every hour of every day, the already awful, apocalyptic conditions faced by besieged Palestinians in what remains of Gaza and the West Bank worsen. The halting scenes of devastation and despair are almost beyond comprehension. Every minute of every hour of every day, more innocents — mostly children and women — are being killed, their bodies wrapped in white shrouds by surviving families whose grief is tempered by the knowledge that they will, in all likelihood, be the next to die.

Every minute of every hour of every day, more innocents — mostly children and women — remain entombed under rubble or

succumb to starvation, disease and the dispiriting exhaustion brought on by one forced march after another. Every minute of every hour of every day, Gaza and much of the West Bank has been erased, reduced to dust and memory.

And every minute of every hour of every day, innocent Israelis remain captive by Hamas and the imperial designs and parochial whims of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who has — according to his sacked defence minister, Yoav Gallant — rejected peace deals that would have ended the wholesale agony months ago. All along, Netanyahu has played Biden and company for chumps. He knew that America's unqualified support for Israel's "right to defend itself" — regardless of who occupies the Oval Office — meant that Biden and compliant company were obliged to approve of the destruction of Gaza and the West Bank.

The public spats over the scope and scale of the carnage have been rhetorical. Netanyahu understood that Biden et al were also obliged to provide the arms and money to engineer a genocide that has killed more than 43,000 [and counting] in a little more than a year.

Every minute of every hour of every day, Netanyahu has crossed each and every so-called legal, humanitarian, and strategic "red line" in pursuit of a "killing rage" that still burns hot despite Gallant's admission that Israel has achieved, apparently, its military objectives.

"There's nothing left in Gaza to do. The major achievements have been achieved," an Israeli TV station quoted him as saying. "I fear we are staying there just

because there is a desire to be there."

There is one man who can disabuse Israel and, more particularly, Benjamin Netanyahu, of the "desire" to continue the "killing rage" — US President Joe Biden.

A deadline of sorts towards that merciful end has been set. It is November 12. Biden, if he is to be believed, has told Israel that unless it takes tangible steps to relieve the humanitarian calamity in Gaza and the West Bank, it risks having the pipeline of American arms turned off.

Last week, State Department spokesperson, Matthew Miller, signalled the Biden Administration's alleged displeasure with Israel's phantom efforts to improve the catastrophic conditions rampant throughout Gaza and the West Bank. NBC News reported Miller saying that "US demands on aid so far were 'not good enough,' and that its recommendations had 'not been met.'" Well, in 24 hours or so, the world will see whether Biden will keep his word or confirm that his belated warnings are just the vacuous posturing of a spent, lame-duck president whose leverage with Netanyahu evaporated on November 6.

Although I am pessimistic, Biden could surprise and use his pulpit and authority to put a recalcitrant Netanyahu in his place and demand that Israel's "killing rage" end, and end now, in order to save the lives of Palestinians and Israelis.

If Biden fails to do what he promises, in part, to do, then his sorry legacy will indeed be fixed in history.

Joe Biden will be judged and remembered as a president who saw suffering and did nothing to heal it and enabled a genocide, rather than stop it.

Clearing the skies over Lahore: Departmental roles in tackling smog

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

SMOG has become an enduring environmental and health crisis in Punjab, particularly in Lahore, where the population suffers every winter as air quality declines. This issue requires urgent attention and comprehensive action from government and semi-government departments, with roles spanning from environmental regulation to urban planning and public health initiatives. Tackling smog is no longer just a matter of environmental concern; it affects public health, economic productivity, and the quality of life, particularly in densely populated areas like Lahore.

The primary government body tasked with addressing environmental issues, including smog, is the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) of Punjab. This department is responsible for monitoring air quality and ensuring compliance with environmental laws and standards. The EPD has developed regulations to reduce emissions from factories, vehicles, and other sources, but enforcement remains a major challenge. Regular inspections, penalties, and shutdowns of non-compliant industrial units could bring a significant reduction in smog if effectively enforced. The EPD has initiated awareness campaigns and drives for tree plantation, yet these efforts need scaling up to match the problem's magnitude.

Pakistan's Meteorological Department also plays a key role by forecasting weather patterns that contribute to smog formation. In Lahore, smog levels intensify with the onset of winter as temperature inversions trap pollutants close to the ground. The Meteorological Department provides valuable information that can help other departments pre-emptively manage or mitigate high-smog episodes. Early warnings can enable the public to take precautions and allow relevant departments to implement temporary measures to alleviate the effects.

The Lahore Traffic Police and Punjab Transport Department hold responsibility for reducing vehicular emissions, a significant contributor to smog in urban areas. High numbers of vehicles on the roads, combined with inadequate emission control standards, aggravate the situation. The Traffic Police have been conducting campaigns to check vehicles for emissions compliance, and there are policies encouraging public transport and carpooling. The Transport Department has a role in promoting eco-friendly transportation options, such as electric buses, but such solutions are still in their infancy. Incentives to promote electric vehicles, stringent checks on fuel quality, and active discouragement of high-emission vehicles could make a meaningful impact.

Industrial activity, another significant contributor to air pollution, requires regulation from the Punjab Small Industries Corporation (PSIC) and the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). These agencies are tasked with ensuring that industrial facilities adhere to emissions standards. Unfortunately, lax enforcement and limited resources make compliance an ongoing issue. The EPA, for example, has insufficient staff to inspect every factory regularly, resulting in factories that continue to operate despite not meeting pollution standards. Measures such as stricter penalties, the closure of repeat violators, and enhanced support for industries adopting green technologies could greatly reduce industrial emissions in Punjab.

Agricultural practices, especially the burning of crop residue in nearby districts and across the border in India, contribute to the seasonal increase in smog. This is an area where the Punjab

Agriculture Department needs to collaborate with farmers to promote alternative practices to crop burning. Efforts to promote mechanized sowing methods and provide subsidies for equipment that can manage crop residue without burning could yield positive results. Educating farmers on the adverse effects of burning and providing practical alternatives can mitigate agricultural pollution during critical smog-prone periods.

In urban areas, the role of the Lahore Development Authority (LDA) cannot be overlooked. Urban planning directly affects pollution levels, as the development of green spaces and tree-lined streets can reduce pollution. However, Lahore's rapid urbanization has led to deforestation and loss of green cover, further compounding the smog problem. The LDA, in collaboration with city authorities, should focus on creating more green belts and maintaining existing parks and natural reserves. Implementing stringent construction standards that limit dust and emissions is essential to curb particulate matter from construction sites, which contributes to the thickening smog layer.

The healthcare sector, particularly the Punjab Health Department, also has a role in managing the consequences of smog. Air pollution has direct impacts on public health, increasing respiratory and cardiovascular problems.

Hospitals in Lahore report a rise in cases of asthma, chronic bronchitis, and other related ailments during smog season. The Health Department can play a preventive role by raising awareness among the public about the health risks associated with smog and providing timely guidelines on how to reduce exposure. Moreover, setting up specialized respiratory care units in hospitals and ensuring the availability of respiratory medications would help manage the health impact of smog on vulnerable populations.

The collaboration between government departments is crucial, and a multi-sectoral approach is necessary for effective smog management. Improved coordination between these departments can ensure timely actions, such as traffic diversions on high-smog days, advisories for outdoor activities, and shutdowns of high-polluting factories during peak pollution periods. Additionally, Punjab's provincial government has started an Anti-Smog Squad, which is responsible for monitoring and cracking down on the worst pollution violators in the province. This is a positive step, but it needs strengthening with more resources and authority to enforce penalties without delay.

Smog in Lahore is not an issue that can be resolved overnight; it requires consistent policy changes and active enforcement. Public participation is also essential, as individual actions contribute to the overall pollution levels. Educating the public about responsible practices, such as reducing vehicle use, avoiding unnecessary outdoor burning, and planting trees, can foster a sense of collective responsibility.

In conclusion, the responsibility for combating smog in Lahore and Punjab rests on the shoulders of multiple government and semi-government departments, each playing a unique and significant role.

However, the effectiveness of these efforts depends on seamless coordination, strict enforcement of regulations, and public cooperation. The challenge of smog demands both immediate action to reduce pollution levels and long-term strategies to ensure cleaner air for future generations. With the right policy focus and enhanced collaboration, Punjab can hope to overcome the persistent smog crisis, ensuring a healthier environment for all its residents.

No, Trump will not be worse than Biden for Palestine and the Middle East

SINCE former United States President Donald Trump's election victory, many observers have predicted that his administration would be far worse for Palestine and the Middle East. His pro-Israel rhetoric and threats to bomb Iran, they say, point to his foreign policy intentions.

Yet a closer look at US foreign policy over the past eight years reveals that nothing fundamental will change for the Palestinian people and the region as a whole. This is because President Joe Biden's administration in effect continued the policies of the first Trump presidency without major changes. Although there may be surprises and unexpected developments, the second Trump administration will continue in the same direction it set back in 2017 and Biden decided to maintain in 2021.

There are three main elements of this foreign policy. First is the decision to abandon any remaining pretence about US support for a "two-state solution", in which Palestine would enjoy full self-determination and sovereignty within 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The first Trump administration made that clear by moving the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, accepting the Israeli annexation of Palestinian territories, encouraging illegal settlement expansion and backing the creation of a "Palestinian entity" that would not enjoy sovereignty.

What the Trump administration offered to the Palestinians was some economic support in exchange for giving up their political rights and self-determination aspirations.

While the Biden administration rhetorically backed the "two-state solution", it did not do anything to push for its realisation. In fact, it continued the policies set by the Trump administration that undermine such a solution.

Biden did not close the US embassy in Jerusalem and did nothing to stop settlement expansion or roll back Israeli efforts to annex large parts of the occupied

West Bank. Although some sanctions were applied to Israeli settlers as individuals, this was largely a symbolic move that has not hampered the settlement movement or the expulsion of Palestinians from their homes and lands.

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What the Trump administration offered to the Palestinians was some economic support in exchange for giving up their political rights and self-determination aspirations. While the Biden administration rhetorically backed the "two-state solution", it did not do anything to push for its realisation. In fact, it continued the policies set by the Trump administration that undermine such a solution. Biden did not close the US embassy in Jerusalem and did nothing to stop settlement expansion or roll back Israeli efforts to annex large parts of the occupied West Bank. Although some sanctions were applied to Israeli settlers as individuals, this was largely a symbolic move that has not hampered the settlement movement or the expulsion of Palestinians from their homes and lands.

Furthermore, the Biden administration accepted the idea that any future Palestinian state would not enjoy full rights of self-determination or sovereignty. We know this because the Biden administration holds the position that Palestinian statehood can only come "through direct negotiations between the parties". But because Israel has made it clear in policy and law that it will never accept a Palestinian state, the Biden administration's position in effect means a rejection of Palestinian self-determination and sovereignty. The second element of the Trump-Biden foreign policy is the advancement of Arab normalisation with Israel through the Abraham Accords. The first Trump administration initiated this path with normalisation deals between Israel and Morocco, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. The Biden administration vigorously pursued this path, exerting significant effort to normalise relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia. Had it not been for the ongoing genocide of the past year, this normalisation deal might have already been achieved by now.

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Muhannad Ayyash

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What the Abraham Accords path essentially means is that the Arab states would recognise Israel's full sovereignty over historic Palestine, putting an end to claims for restitution and justice for the Palestinian

continued to push Trump's vision for the establishment of a new economic and security arrangement in the region between Israel and Arab states to secure US interests and isolate Iran.

If realised, this pact would enhance the US ability to project military power, secure its access to critical energy resources and trade routes, and weaken resistance to US imperialism, so the US would be in a better

Those who stand in the way of this plan are the Palestinian people with their national aspirations for freedom and liberation as well as other nations across the Arab world that are tired of war, political violence, repression and impoverishment.

The Trump administration will try to deal with this resistance by buying people off with economic incentives and the threat of violence and repression. But this approach will have – as it always has had – limited impact.

Resistance to these plans will persist because Palestinians and others in the region understand that giving up one's right to justice means giving up one's very identity as a free and dignified human being. And people would rather suffer the threats of empire than give up their humanity.

What this ultimately means is that not only will resistance persist, but it is likely to grow and intensify, moving the world closer to a path of great wars – the very opposite of what vast numbers of Americans voted for in November 5 elections.

The Palestinians, other fellow nations in the region and to a certain extent ordinary Americans will continue to suffer the consequences of a bipartisan foreign policy that has set the US on a fundamentally destructive path of genocide and war.

Based on Trump's proclamations during the campaign and the advisers, donors and supporters whom he is surrounded with, there is every reason to believe his second administration will continue to push further down this bipartisan path to eliminate the "Palestinian Question" once and for all.

We can expect to see more unconditional support for Israel to officially annex the majority of the West Bank, the permanent Israeli colonisation of parts of the Gaza Strip, the expulsion of masses of Palestinians under the pretext of pursuing "peace, security and prosperity", and the advancement of Israel's economic and security integration into the region to weaken Iran and its allies, including China.

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Trump is already wielding power and causing massive disruption

Stephen Collinson,

Thune, the current minority whip, posted on X that all options were on the table including recess appointments. And Cornyn wrote on X that Republicans would stay in session to try to overcome any Democratic efforts to block Trump's nominees, posting: "Additionally, the Constitution expressly confers the power on the President to make recess appointments."

Retribution: Washington is waiting, with trepidation to see if Trump follows through on his vow to use his new power to pursue his enemies.

House Judiciary Chairman Jim Jordan insisted Sunday on CNN's "State of the Union": "I don't think any of that is going to happen."

The Ohio Republican told Dana Bash, "We're the party who's against political prosecution. We're the party who's against going after your opponents using lawfare." Still, Jordan has already officially warned special counsel Jack Smith, who led federal criminal investigations into Trump, to preserve records in order to leave open the possibility of a congressional investigation.

Trump's best political bet might be to use all his capital on his first 100-days agenda. But his life-long mantra is to get even with enemies.

Musk at the heart of government: One moment last week showed how Trump's second term is likely to be even more unorthodox than his first.

Musk, the Tesla and SpaceX pioneer, joined the call between Trump and Zelensky the day after the election, a source with knowledge of the situation told CNN.

A president-elect can put anyone he wants on a call. But since Musk has massive contracts with the US government, his mere presence alongside Trump – for whom he campaigned vigorously and promoted on X, which he owns – represents an apparent massive conflict of interest.

Musk's Starlink internet service is also critical for Ukraine's troops battling Russia's brutal invasion. Since Trump vowed to end the war and is close to Russian President Vladimir Putin, it's hard not to interpret Musk's presence as potential leverage over Zelensky if he refuses to comply with Trump's future demands.

In a broader sense, the Trump-Musk friendship is a fascinating glimpse into the unorthodox inner circle the president-elect will bring to Washington. Their relationship offers Trump the affirmation of being feted by the world's richest man. Musk gets inside access to the soon-to-be world's most powerful man. And both are examples of outsiders who have bypassed normal routes to great influence through their vast wealth. Now they both wield great power that was once reserved for traditional political elites.

Foreign leaders scramble: Presidents and prime ministers are ingratiating themselves with the president-elect with congratulatory calls and facing scrutiny at home over how they will deal with him. Trump is promising to return to the volatile foreign policy that defined his first term – and then some. There are already fears he'll ignore NATO's core principle of mutual self-defense or compromise Taiwan's security by saying the US would not come to the democratic island's aid in the event China invaded.

Almost every assumption, therefore, about American power and policy that underpinned the post-World War II and post-Cold War world is now uncertain. The conundrum facing US allies was laid out by French President Emmanuel Macron, who rode the Trump first-term roller-coaster.

With transatlantic tensions expected to rise again, Macron pointed out last week that Trump was elected to represent the interests of Americans and questioned whether Europe would take care of its own interests.

"I have no intention of leaving Europe as a stage inhabited by herbivores, only for carnivores to come and devour (us) according to their agenda," Macron said, in a translation of his remarks on his official X account.

— CNN

A diversifying Europe must not tear itself apart

INITIAL reports from Amsterdam last week described horrific scenes of Israeli football supporters being beaten up in violent clashes that the authorities condemned as antisemitic.

A more nuanced version of events gradually emerged: extremist fans of Maccabi Tel Aviv had been creating chaos before and during the match against Ajax, with anti-Arab chants and the championing of Israeli attacks on Gaza. Houses bearing Palestinian flags had been attacked. Among a relentless succession of racist chants, supporters sang: "There are no schools in Gaza, because there are no children left." All hell broke loose after the match, with violent clashes between Maccabi fans and local people, many of whom are of North African origin. Gangs of youths attacked Israeli football fans.

The Maccabi ultras have a shameful history of racist violence and agitation, with strong connections to Israel's extreme right. Fans are notorious for shouting racist slogans at players of various ethnicities, including members of their own team – such as the Jewish Ethiopian player Baruch Dego, who routinely had to put up with monkey noises from the crowd. During the 2020-2021 anti-Netanyahu protests, Maccabi fans attacked protesters with sticks and broken bottles.

This all raises the question of why European states let them enter in the first place and why preemptive measures were not taken to prevent violence. Indeed, the controversial decision has been taken to proceed with the Israeli national team's match in Paris this week, despite everything that occurred in Amsterdam.

We should condemn violence of all kinds. But this is just one example of thousands of such tumultuous incidents since the eruption of violence in the Middle East in October 2023, which has given rise to mass demonstrations around the world by supporters of both sides, a sharp rise in antisemitic and Islamophobic attacks, and a tsunami of online hate speech, misinformation and incitement.

Much of this exacerbation in worldwide civil

In France, more than 10 percent of the population are immigrants born outside the country, with a significantly wider proportion of citizens having parentage of various ethnic origins. Many other European states enjoy comparable levels of diversity. The reality is that immigration into Europe will continue increasing, because the economies of aging Western nations with plunging birth rates are in dire need of foreign workers and the number of people displaced by conflict and instability worldwide has soared. Over the coming century, we will probably reach the point at which a majority of European citizens claim, at least in part, descent from immigrants. Entire economic sectors these days are dominated by people of a broad spectrum of ethnicities. Thus, the racist panic of those on the extreme right arises from a recognition that their hateful cause is already lost. When I moved into my current home many years ago, the previous owner remarked that in this "really nice neighborhood" I would not come across anybody else from other countries. Nowadays, a significant number of my neighbors are of South Asian origin. But we must not ignore the genuine social challenges of large-scale immigration. Refugees are often traumatized by the horrific experiences from which they fled. The children of immigrants often feel a sense of dislocation, of not properly fitting into either culture. Too many immigrant districts have become ghettoized, as impaired access to quality education, services and career opportunities create a vicious circle of deprivation.

tensions, such as the rioting that erupted across Britain in the summer after three children were stabbed to death at a dance class, has been deliberately engineered by various entities with specific anti-social agendas. Fake online claims that the perpetrator of the Southport stabbing was a Muslim immigrant led to far-right and neo-Nazi groups organizing several nights of violent Islamophobic rioting. Hostels housing immigrants and people from ethnic minorities were attacked. The rioting subsided only after huge nationwide antiracism rallies, along with a robust government response.

Such events occur in the context of years of whipping up of anti-immigrant sentiments by right-wing politicians and the pop-

Baria Alamuddin

ulist media, normalizing increasingly draconian political measures to curb immigration, often with the shocking outcome that thousands of those fleeing war and persecution are abandoned to drown at sea.

Europe plays host to huge populations of multi-ethnic origins, including

North Africa and the Middle East. While such xenophobia is frequently focused on recent migrants and refugees, the extreme right has also sought to foment hatred of all those of non-European origin. The Gaza conflict has contributed to this polarization, with the far right seeking to demonize Arabs and Muslims as "terrorism supporters," while huge numbers of white Europeans have become increasingly outspoken in support of the Palestinian cause.

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diversity. The reality is that immigration into Europe will continue increasing, because the economies of aging Western nations with plunging birth rates are in dire need of foreign workers and the number of people displaced by conflict and instability worldwide has soared. Over the coming century, we will probably reach the point at

which they fled. The children of immigrants often feel a sense of dislocation, of not properly fitting into either culture. Too many immigrant districts have become ghettoized, as impaired access to quality education, services and career opportunities create a vicious circle of deprivation.

Cultural diversity is already wholly inherent to contemporary Europe, and managed immigration is a prerequisite for its continued economic vigor. The world's greatest cities, such as London, New York and Paris, are the most diverse. Newly arriving cultural influences immensely enrich Europe: music, art, literature, food and other cultural practices have immeasurably broadened the quality of life of communities that were previously rather more parochial, conservative and homogenous. Governments must take the lead in encouraging societies to celebrate and champion this diversity, which enriches us all.

The real threat to Europe from within is not from North Africans, Turks or Afghans, but from the narrow-minded xenophobes and hatemongering media organs that aspire to tear their own societies apart.

—Arab News



PSX continues with bullish trend, gains 356 more points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Monday, gaining 356.64 more points, a positive change of 0.38%, closing at 93,648.33 points as compared to 93,291.68 points on the last trading day.

A total of 815,188,409 shares were traded during the day as compared to 763,255,174 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs37.324 billion against Rs30.206 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 454 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 227 of them recorded gains and 184 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 43 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Energycio PK with 98,601,408 shares

at Rs4.52 per share, Pak Elektron with 78,094,188 shares at Rs29.01 per share and K-Electric Limited with 70,187,495 shares at Rs4.98 per share.

Rafhan Maixze Products Company Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs211.95 per share price, closing at Rs7,522.00, whereas the runner-up was Abbott Laboratories (Pakistan) Limited with Rs87.42 rise in its per share price to Rs984.72.

Ismail Industries Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs87.46 per share closing at Rs1,515.54 followed by Sapphire Fibres Limited with Rs60.29 decline to close at Rs1,129.08.

Rupee sheds 13 paise against dollar

Pakistani rupee on Monday depreciated by 13 paise against the US dollar

in the interbank trading and closed at Rs277.86 against the previous day's closing of Rs277.73.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs277.40 and Rs278.90 respectively.

The price of Euro decreased by Rs1.87 to close at Rs297.07 against the last day's closing of Rs298.94, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese yen came down by 02 paise and closed at Rs1.80, whereas a decline of Rs1.28 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs358.26 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs359.54.

The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal went up by 03

and 04 paise to close at Rs75.64 and Rs73.97, respectively.

Gold prices decrease by Rs1,300 to Rs277,500 per tola

The price of 24 karat per tola gold decreased by Rs1,300 and was sold at Rs277,500 on Monday against its sale at Rs278,800, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also went down by Rs1,115 to Rs237,911 from Rs239,026 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat gold increased to Rs218.085 from Rs219,107.

The price of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs3,300 and Rs2,829.21, respectively.

The price of gold in the international market declined by \$13 to \$2,670 from \$2,683, the Association reported.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb chairing a meeting with delegation from APM Terminals led by CEO Keith Svendsen.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Six ships, ONE Reassurance, Apollon-D, Milaha Ras Laffan, Ogun, FSM and Navios Sun carrying Container, LNG, LPG and Coal, berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal, Engro Elengy Terminal, Pakistan Port Gas Terminal and Pakistan International Bulk Terminal respectively on Sunday.

Meanwhile three more ships, Nave Estella, Crims-on Delight and Falmouth Bay carrying Gas oil and Coal are also arrived at outer anchorage on same day. Thirteen ships were engaged at POA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two ships, ONE Reassurance and Aristarchos are left the port on today morning, while five more ships, Apollon-D, East Wind, Tamrey-S, Malamir and FSM are expected to sail on today afternoon.

Cargo volume of 229,227 tonnes, comprising 194,097 tonnes imports cargo and 35,130 tonnes export cargo carried in 2,785 Containers (1,850 TEUs Imports & 935 TEUs Export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

Fourteen ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them three ships, Kanoa, Mars-J and Nord Master scheduled to load/offload Rice, Soya Been Seed and Mogas are expected to take berths at FAP and FOTCO respectively on Monday. Meanwhile another containers ship 'Navios Tempo' is due to arrive at outer anchorage on Tuesday.

Mujtaba, PPMA discuss pharma sector's issues

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Finance Minister Mian Mujtaba Shuja-ur-Rehman held a meeting with representatives of Pakistan Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association (PPMA) to discuss the challenges and concerns faced by pharmaceutical companies here Monday.

The purpose of the meeting was to gain an understanding of the pharmaceutical industry's concerns and to outline the government's initiatives for addressing them.

The Provincial Minister informed the PPMA representatives that a dedicated committee is being established to resolve the pharmaceutical sector's issues.

This committee will include all stakeholders, with leadership from provincial ministers, ensuring that the industry's challenges are addressed on a priority basis.

The Finance Minister also urged pharmaceutical companies to ensure the steady supply of medicines to government hospitals, especially essential drugs during the ongoing smog season so as to avoid any disruptions in public healthcare services.

He emphasized that healthcare sector remains a top priority for Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, and that improvements in this area are closely linked to the

cooperation and support of pharmaceutical companies and manufacturers.

Addressing concerns regarding payment mechanisms, the Minister assured PPMA representatives that the government is carefully reviewing these issues and will implement measures to facilitate fair and timely payments.

Mian Mujtaba Shuja-ur-Rehman assured the PPMA representatives that their concerns would be addressed on a priority and that the collaboration between the government and the pharmaceutical industry would be instrumental in enhancing healthcare services across the province.

Askari Bank leads uplift of cashless ecosystem

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Askari Bank is establishing itself in the area of digital financial services with its latest initiative to create a cashless ecosystem. Building on the experience of digital offering, including industry's first indigenous biometric verification integrated solution, Askari Bank is positioned to extend innovative financial solutions with a commitment for financial inclusion to support its mission of 'Getting Closer to the Customer.'

Conceived and funded by Karandaaz Pakistan, an impact investment platform dedicated to driving sustainable economic growth and strengthening financial and social protection systems for inclusion, Askari Bank, in collaboration with Digital Miles, a fintech innovation lab, has launched Pakistan's first comprehensive Cashless Ecosystem Project aimed at

digitalizing communities. In this regard, a signing ceremony was hosted in which the Acting President and CEO Askari Bank, Mr. Saleem Anwar, the CDO of Askari Bank, Mr. Ali Naqvi, the CEO of Karandaaz Pakistan, Mr. Waqas Ul Hasan, the CDO of Karandaaz, Mr. Sharjeel Murtaza, Group Head - DFS Projects at Karandaaz, Mr. Taimoor Ali, the CEO of Digital Miles, Mr. Rehan Ahmad Akhtar, and other senior officials participated. Commenting on the impact of this project, the Acting President and CEO of Askari Bank, Mr. Saleem Anwar, said, "This project is first step for a major transformation aimed at financially inclusive and smart communities."

CEO of Karandaaz Pakistan, Mr. Waqas Ul Hasan, said, "This partnership marks a crucial step toward Karandaaz's vision of a cashless ecosystem within Pakistan. Starting with

housing societies, this initiative will enable residents, merchants, and institutions to operate seamlessly in a fully digital environment, setting the stage for a financially inclusive, efficient, and forward-looking community experience."

Similarly, the CEO of Digital Miles, Mr. Rehan Ahmad Akhtar, said, "We are equally excited to be part of this initiative and this partnership will enable us to leverage our digital finance innovation expertise to create a fully integrated cashless environment that will benefit residents, merchants, and institutional setups within the ecosystem."

This pioneering project is designed to fully digitalize all interactions and transactions within the housing society ecosystem. From financial transactions between residents and society management, every interface will be seamlessly integrated into a digital platform.

Pharmaceutical exports increase 31.11%

ISLAMABAD (APP): The exports of pharmaceutical witnessed an increase of 31.11 percent during the first quarter of the current financial year 2024-25, as against the exports of the corresponding months of last year.

The pharmaceutical exports from the country were recorded at US

\$105.936 million during July-September (2024-25) against the exports of US \$80.796 million during July-September (2023-24), according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). Meanwhile, year-on-year basis, the pharmaceutical exports witnessed an increase of 61.55 percent

during the month of September 2024 as compared to the same month of last year.

Exports of pharmaceutical from the country during September 2024 were recorded at US \$43.607 million against the exports of US \$26.992 million in September 2023.

Ghulam Ali congratulates newly elected business cabinets

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Former Governor and Central Secretary General of the Businessmen Panel, Haji Ghulam Ali, along with the KP Vice President of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Aun Ali Syed, conducted an extensive tour of various chambers across the province. They congratulated the newly elected presidents, cabinet members, and executive members and reiterated their commitment to work together in addressing the issues facing the business community.

Yesterday, they visited the Nowshera Chamber, Mardan Chamber of Commerce, Mardan Small Traders Chamber, and Mardan Women Chamber of Commerce, accompanied by Haripur Chamber President Shehbaz Mehmood, Haji Manzoor,



Ghulam Bilal Javid, and former Coordinator Sartaj Ahmad Khan. During their visits, they congratulated the presidents, senior vice presidents, vice presidents, and cabinet members of each chamber, presented floral garlands, and held important meetings to discuss the issues facing the business communities in

these areas.

Chamber officials expressed gratitude to Haji Ghulam Ali and Aun Ali Syed, acknowledging their longstanding support for the business community and shared their suggestions on resolving business-related issues. In these meetings, Haji Ghulam Ali and

Federation's Regional Vice President Aun Ali Syed assured the officials that issues affecting the business community in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a region impacted by terrorism, would be presented at both federal and provincial levels. They pledged to work tirelessly to address and alleviate the challenges faced by the business community.

They further stated that officials would also be engaged to establish a free trade policy with neighboring countries around Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, facilitating open import and export routes and creating job opportunities alongside business growth. The newly elected presidents and other cabinet members warmly welcomed the former governor and Aun Ali to the chambers and presented them with commemorative shields.

Stocks diverge, bitcoin hits record high

LONDON (AFP/APP): Major stock markets diverged, the dollar gained and bitcoin extended a record run higher Monday, as traders took their lead from events in the United States and China.

Chinese stock markets closed mixed and oil prices slid after China's latest plans to stimulate its economy fell short of expectations.

Europe saw solid gains around midday, tracking events in the United States where president-elect Donald Trump is putting together his cabinet.

"European markets are enjoying an upbeat start to the week, with the uncertainty around trade relations with the US seemingly being put on the back-burner," said Joshua Mahony, analyst at traders Scope Markets.

Stocks rallied last week on hopes that a second Trump administration -- supported by a Republican Congress -- would push through a slew of business-friendly policies including deregulation and tax cuts, offsetting concerns about

possible trade wars.

However, the mood changed after China said Friday it would ramp up a local debt ceiling, but fell short of announcing any new growth-boosting measures.

Hopes had been building all last week that officials would deploy a "bazooka" stimulus, the need for which was highlighted Sunday by data showing Chinese inflation slowed last month and came in below forecasts.

Authorities in late September began unveiling a raft of policies aimed at reigniting the economy, which has failed to fire since the lifting of tough Covid-fighting rules at the end of 2022.

Among them were interest-rate cuts and an easing of home-buying measures as leaders try to address a crisis in China's vast property sector.

Wall Street indices hit fresh record highs Friday, helped also by another cut in US interest rates by the Federal Reserve.

Observers said there were concerns about the

impact of Trump's planned tariffs, which he said would have a particular focus on China, fuelling talk of another trade war between the economic superpowers.

Pepperstone Group's head of research Chris Weston said Beijing may have had an eye on this in its pre-weekend announcement.

"Many feel that China is keeping its tactical powder in play for such time as the Trump-China tariff negotiations build, and they can respond in a more targeted fashion to stem the likely economic fallout," he noted.

Weston added that there were downside risks to Chinese stock markets and yuan in the short term.

Bitcoin hit an all-time high \$82,387.50 Monday on optimism that Trump would ease regulations surrounding the cryptocurrency.

"We shouldn't expect this bullish trend to be interrupted for a long time - about a year," Stephane Ifrah, of French crypto asset management compa-

ny Coinhouse, told AFP. "The next level for me is \$100,000."

Philippines' FDI net inflows drop by 14.5 per cent

MANILA (APP): The foreign direct investment (FDI) into the Philippines fell by 14.5 percent year over year in August to reach 813 million US dollars, the Philippine central bank said Monday.

"The decline in FDI net inflows during the month was due mainly to the 21.6 percent contraction in nonresidents' net investments in debt instruments to \$29 million dollars from 675 million dollars," the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) said in its press release.

The BSP added that nonresidents' reinvestment of earnings also declined by 9.4 percent to 217 million dollars from 240 million dollars.

Meanwhile, the BSP said that nonresidents' net investments in equity capital other than reinvestment of earnings expanded by 83.6 percent to 66 million dollars from 36 million dollars in August 2023. These equity capital placements emanated mainly from Japan and the United States and were primarily invested in the manufacturing, real estate, and electricity, gas, steam, and air-conditioning supply industries, the bank said.

On a cumulative basis, the BSP said net FDI inflows from January to August this year rose by 3.9 percent to 6.1 billion dollars from the net inflows of 5.8 billion dollars posted in January-August 2023.

Sehat Kahani, Jubilee Life Insurance signed agreement — to extend OPD services, enhancing comprehensive healthcare access for beneficiaries

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Jubilee Life Insurance, Pakistan's leading private-sector life insurance company, has expanded its partnership with Sehat Kahani, the nation's leading telemedicine platform, to introduce outpatient department (OPD) claims' management services. This enhancement significantly broadens the range of benefits available to Jubilee Life Insurance policyholders, who can now enjoy streamlined access to OPD Management services alongside their existing hospitalization coverage.

At a signing ceremony held in Karachi, Jubilee Life Insurance and Sehat Kahani reaffirmed their

collaborative commitment to enhancing healthcare accessibility. Through this partnership, Jubilee life Insurance policyholders will benefit from a comprehensive, one-window solution that includes consultations, claims processing, cashless pharmacy, and laboratory services, along with 24/7 access to doctors within 60 seconds.

This initiative aligns with Sehat Kahani's mission to improve healthcare accessibility and quality for individuals across Pakistan, making healthcare more convenient and comprehensive for Jubilee Life Insurance's valued policyholders.

Speaking at the signing ceremony Dr. Sara Saeed Khurram, Co-founder &

CEO of Sehat Kahani, stated, "This expansion of our collaboration with Jubilee Life Insurance into outpatient services builds on our successful inpatient collaboration. We aim to provide better healthcare options for our customers and make quality medical services accessible to everyone."

Further Dr. Iffat Zafar Aga, Co-founder & COO of Sehat Kahani, added, "This collaboration signifies our commitment to enhancing healthcare delivery in Pakistan. We look forward to working closely with Jubilee Life Insurance to implement impactful solutions that address the diverse needs of patients."

Also, Mr. Javed Ahmed, Managing Director and

Chief Executive Officer of Jubilee Life Insurance Company Limited, expressed his enthusiasm for the partnership, saying, "Our collaboration with Sehat Kahani has already resulted in over 200,000 successful consultations. We are excited to expand into outpatient services, providing comprehensive healthcare solutions to our policyholders. This partnership represents our dedication to improving the health and well-being of our customers through innovative services."

Introducing OPD services will empower Jubilee Life Insurance policyholders to receive timely medical consultations and services without the burden of extensive paperwork and

lengthy processes. By integrating these services, Sehat Kahani and Jubilee Life Insurance aim to streamline healthcare access and facilitate a smoother experience for patients.

This partnership is expected to address the growing demand for accessible healthcare solutions in Pakistan, particularly in the wake of the ongoing challenges posed by the healthcare system. By combining the strengths of both organizations, the collaboration seeks to create a holistic approach to patient care, ensuring that individuals receive comprehensive support at every

Sehat Kahani: Sehat Kahani is a widely used Digital healthcare



platform in Pakistan with the vision to democratize healthcare access for all using technology and a committed network of doctors with the commitment to enable flexible work opportunities for female doctors otherwise facing socio-cultural barriers to

practice. Sehat Kahani's platform is available as a Mobile Application for mass consumers and corporations and as e-clinics in low-income communities.

Jubilee Life Insurance: Jubilee Life Insurance Company Limited is Pakistan's largest private

sector insurance company, providing a comprehensive range of life and health insurance products. With a commitment to innovation and customer-centric solutions, Jubilee Life continues to lead the insurance industry in Pakistan.



In brief

Rashid praises cricket team

ISLAMABAD (APP): Former Test cricketer Rashid Latif has commended Pakistan team's remarkable 2-1 ODI series victory over Australia, marking the first such triumph in 22 years. The historic victory was sealed in Perth, where Pakistan's bowlers restricted Australia to just 140 runs in the decisive third ODI. Pakistan then chased down the target of 141 in just 27 overs, losing only 2 wickets, thus clinching the series with a 2-1 win. After completion of the fifty-over series, the Men in Green will face off against Australia in a three-match T20I series starting November 14. Latif credited several key factors for Pakistan's success, emphasizing the importance of good leadership. The former captain explained that a strong captain plays a pivotal role in uniting the team, both on and off the field. "When you have a good captain, the team performs on the ground. We can see this happening in this series," he remarked, praising the leadership on display," he said in an interview with a local news channel as quoted by cricketpakistan.com.pk. The former wicket-keeper-batter noted that the victory was not just about leadership but also about effective player selection and the ability to adapt to pitch conditions. "In this win, captaincy, player selection, and pitch conditions all played a significant role," he said. Latif also lauded the outstanding performances from both the Pakistani bowlers and batters. "The bowlers performed beyond expectations, dismissing Australian players who are familiar with their home pitches. And the batting, which chased down 141 with ease, was equally impressive. This win against Australia in Australia is highly encouraging for Pakistan cricket," he said.

Gambhir backs Rohit, Kohli

MUMBAI (AFP): India coach Gautam Gambhir on Monday backed "incredibly tough men" Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli to prove their critics wrong and find form in Australia. Skipper Rohit and superstar batsman Kohli came under fire after India crashed to a humiliating 3-0 Test series home defeat to New Zealand. Rohit scored 91 runs in three matches. Kohli made just 93. Speaking just before India flew off to Australia for a blockbuster five-match Test series, Gambhir said he had "no concerns for Virat and Rohit". "They are incredibly tough men," he said. "They've achieved a lot for Indian cricket and they will continue to achieve a lot in the future as well." Gambhir hit out at Ricky Ponting after the former Australia captain questioned the longer-term form of the two senior batsmen. "What does Ponting have to do with Indian cricket?" Gambhir said. Gambhir said the Indian team as a whole were eager to prove themselves after the New Zealand defeat, only their second Test series whitewash at home. "I feel there is a lot of hunger, especially after what has happened in the last series," he said. Gambhir believes the biggest challenge in Australia will be the quicker pitches compared to India, where conditions are traditionally spin-friendly. But Gambhir said his under-the-cosh side were ready to "fire from ball one" in a series that starts in Perth on November 22.



DUBAI: Hussain Muhammad, Consul General along with other diplomats of Pakistan Consulate in a group photo with Pakistani baseball team after winning Arab Classic Dubai 2024 Tournament. —APP Photo

Pakistan baseball team win United Arab Classic Baseball title

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan national baseball team emerged undefeated champions at the Arab Classic Dubai 2024. According to information made available here by Pakistan Federation Baseball (PFB), the team went unbeaten on their way to the final, showcasing unparalleled prowess against all oppositions. Competing against eight other teams, Pakistan asserted their dominance from the outset, securing an impressive series of vic-

tories that culminated in a commanding win over the UAE in the final match. Throughout the tournament, Pakistan's journey was nothing short of spectacular. Starting with a 10-0 shutout against Bangladesh, the team kept up the momentum, defeating the UAE 10-3 and overpowering India with a sweeping 12-0. In the quarterfinals, they faced Afghanistan, scoring a remarkable 17-3 victory. In the semifinals, they held strong against Sri

Lanka, winning 3-0. In the final, Pakistan proved unstoppable, clinching the championship title with a decisive 12-1 win over the UAE. This victory cements Pakistan's standing as a force in international baseball and adds to the nation's growing legacy in the sport. The PBF officials expressed profound pride in the team's stellar performance, calling this victory a significant milestone for the sport in Pakistan.

Pak stars to participate in Lanka T10 Super League

ISLAMABAD (APP): The inaugural edition of the Lanka T10 Super League is all set to kick start in December in Kandy. The fast-paced form of cricket will witness six franchises, Colombo Jaguars, Galle Marvels, Hambantota Bangla Tigers, Jaffna Titans, Kandy Bolts and Nuwara Eliya Kings battling it out against each other for the ultimate glory, said a press release. The teams have included some of the finest talents from all around the globe in their roster during the Lanka T10 Super League Draft that was held on 10th November, 2024 in Colombo and in the pre-signings. Jaffna Titans have put their weight behind some old school boys. Pakistan's left-arm pacer Mohammad Amir and all-rounder David Wiese were picked up by the Titans during the Player Draft. Amir is someone who can prove lethal with the left-arm pace bowling while Wiese will play a key role both with the bat and ball. Colombo Jaguars who had their icon player, former Sri Lanka captain Angelo Mathews present at the draft, have roped in left-arm pacer Tymal Mills and the very talented Aamer Jamal. The Galle Marvels have a blend of experienced campaigners and some young blood. With Maheesh Theekshana as the Icon player and Shakib Al Hasan being their in the squad in the Platinum category, the addition of someone like Jeffrey Vandersay just adds more fuel to their bowling department. Hambantota Bangla Tigers have some of the most prominent names in the unit who have played a lot of shorter format of the game all around the globe. The franchise has included the likes of Dushmantha Chameera, Richard Gleeson, Mohammad Shahzad and Soumya Sarkar alongside Dasun Shanaka, Kusal Perera and Hazratullah Zazai. Kandy Bolts have added two of the most talented openers in the line up. The Bolts have Pathum Nissanka and Saim Ayub in the side and both have the potential to provide brisk starts to the team. The Bolts have also acquired the services of Shah Nawaz Dahani, who is known for his express pace. Nuwara Eliya Kings have stacked up a steady squad with Lahiru Madushanka, Kasun Rajitha, Avishka Fernando and Saurabh Tiwary being there in the side.

Pakistan Scrabble team denied visas

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Indian High Commission has refused to issue visas to most of Pakistani players, preventing the defending champions from participating in the Asia Cup Youth Scrabble Championship and Delhi Cup. Despite submitting applications two months in advance, the Indian High Commission has delayed processing, issuing some visas too late for players to attend, Pakistan Scrabble Association (PSA) Director Tariq Perez told APP. He said half the team was denied visas without explanation, including players who had previously participated and won in India in 2022. As reigning World Youth Champions and defending Asian Youth titleholders, Pakistan's absence is a significant blow, he said. Pervaz said the team had traveled to Lahore in anticipation of receiving visas but will now return to Karachi disappointed. The championship organizers, who had obtained necessary clearances, were cooperative and assured Pakistani players of visas. However, the Indian High Commission's actions caught them off guard. Pakistan Scrabble Association expressed disappointment, citing India's failure to uphold sporting spirit. The Pakistan team will now focus on upcoming international competitions, hoping for a more favorable outcome, he said.

Athletes prepare for Special Olympics World Winter Games

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairperson of Special Olympics Pakistan, Ronak Iqbal Lakhani, has announced that Pakistan's special athletes will compete in snowshoeing and cross-country skiing events at the Special Olympics World Winter Games, scheduled to be held in Torino, Italy, in March 2025. The Winter Games, commencing on March 8, will host over 1,500 athletes from 103 countries. In preparation for the event, a 10-day training camp for Special Olympics Pakistan athletes was organized in Karachi, with 20 selected athletes from different cities across Pakistan, said a press release. These athletes received training from qualified SOP coaches on Clifton Beach and in a gym, with snowshoes and skis specially imported for this purpose. Indoor sessions covered technical aspects of snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. Lakhani, accompanied by Media Advisor Asif Azeem, visited the athletes at the training camp. Ronak Lakhani emphasized the importance of acclimating the athletes to winter conditions, announcing that the second phase of training will take place in December at a cold location in Khanaspur or Naltar. She encouraged the athletes to continue their hard work, aiming to bring honor to Pakistan through their performances at the Winter Games.

Kashif, Khurram shine against Sri Lanka A

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pacers Kashif Ali and Khurram Shahzad shared nine wickets among them as Pakistan Shaheens bowled out Sri Lanka 'A' for 115 on opening day of the first four-dayer at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium on Monday. At the close of play Pakistan Shaheens trailed by 49 runs as they had posted 66-2 on the board in 24 overs. Only 57.1 overs of play was possible on day one as the stumps were drawn early due to bad light. Earlier, after the hosts put visiting team to bat first, Kashif ran through the Sri Lanka 'A' batting lineup with figures of 5-31 in 12 overs while he was assisted by Test fast bowler Khurram who dismissed four batters for 32 runs in 10.1 overs. After Sri Lanka 'A' were reduced to 14-4, skipper Pasindu Sooriyabandara (28, 40b, 1x4) and top-scorer Sonal Dinusha (30, 66b, 2x4s) stitched a 51-run fifth-wicket stand before Hussain Talat struck to remove the former. At lunch break, Sri Lanka 'A' were 90-6 before losing their next four wickets for 25 runs. In turn, Pakistan Shaheens lost their skipper, Mohammad Huraira, in the seventh over to Test fast bowler Vishwa Fernando. Opening batter, Abdul Faseeh (26, 60b, 2x4s) fell to Wauja Sahan in the 20th over after putting on a 34-run second-wicket stand with fellow southpaw Ali Zaryab. Ali (18 not out, 49b, 2x4s) and Mohammad Suleman (11 not out, 18b, 2x4s) will be on the crease for Pakistan Shaheens when they resume their first innings on day two which is set to begin at 9.15 am. Scores in brief: Pakistan Shaheens trail by 49 runs. Sri Lanka 'A' 115 all out, 33.1 overs (Sonal Dinusha 30, Pasindu Sooriyabandara 28; Kashif Ali 5-31, Khurram Shahzad 4-32). Pakistan Shaheens 66-2, 24 overs (Abdul Faseeh 26, Ali Zaryab 18 not out, Mohammad Suleman 11 not out; Wauja Sahan 1-8, Vishwa Fernando 1-14).

Guardiola vows struggling Man City will 'recover our best'

LONDON (AFP): Pep Guardiola says Manchester City will "recover our best" after he suffered a fourth straight defeat for the first time in his stellar managerial career. City's 2-1 defeat at Brighton on Saturday came after losses to Tottenham in the League Cup, Bournemouth in the Premier League and Sporting Lisbon in the Champions League. Guardiola's men, chasing an unprecedented fifth straight Premier League title, are now five points behind leaders Liverpool after 11 matches in the English top flight. "I was a football player and many times I lost a lot of games -- four in a row, five in a row, six in a row," said the City boss. "I never expect different, the fact we won in the past, that we are special. People can believe that but it's not true." City are struggling badly with injuries, with Ruben Dias, John Stones, Jeremy Doku and Jack Grealish among those absent for the defeat at Bournemouth. "We are not consistent enough to maintain this level that helped us to win what we want for many years," said Guardiola. "Hopefully in the future we'll come back, and if we don't come back we'll learn from that." City have been champions in six of the past seven seasons but it is not uncommon for them to stumble in the autumn. Last season they won just one league game in six

during a spell in November and December but recovered to retain the title. "Don't be complacent when you win a lot, know how difficult it is," said Guardiola. "That makes us believe how difficult it was and how nice it will be when we win again." He added: "Right now we are not in our best, it's obvious. But still it's November so hopefully we'll come back step by step. Every game will be tough for every team. We'll recover our best and then we'll see." After the current international break, City face a testing run-up to Christmas with matches against Tottenham, Liverpool, Nottingham Forest, Crystal Palace, Manchester United and Aston Villa.

Alcaraz beaten by Ruud in ATP Finals opener

TURIN (AFP): Norway's Casper Ruud eased to a straight-sets victory over Carlos Alcaraz on Monday as the Spanish star's bid for a maiden ATP Finals title got off to a poor start. Ruud romped through the opening set before fighting back from 5-2 behind in the second to win 6-1, 7-5 in Turin. World number three Alcaraz, who won the French Open and Wimbledon titles earlier this year, made 34 unforced errors in an uncharacteristically errant display. It was Ruud's first victory over Alcaraz in their five career meetings. "I had two good times in Turin before... This part of the season has not been good for me but hopefully I've saved some wins for this week and I've started well," said 2022 runner-up Ruud, who had suffered seven defeats in eight matches before this tournament. Ruud will head into his second match in the John Newcombe group against Andrey Rublev on Wednesday already well-placed to reach the semifinals for the third time in as many appearances at the year-end event. Alcaraz could be eliminated if he loses to second-ranked Alexander Zverev, who faces Rublev in his opener later on Monday. Third seed Alcaraz quickly slipped 4-1 down, giving up his serve in the fourth game before seeing three break points come and go in the next. Ruud stretched a double-break in front as Alcaraz fired a loose forehand wide and wrapped up the opening set

in just 36 minutes with a hold to love. The four-time Grand Slam champion improved early in the second set, though, bringing up his sixth break point of the match with a trademark forehand winner. He took the opportunity with a delicate volley and then moved into a 5-2 lead with a clinical hold. But Ruud dug deep to force Alcaraz to serve for the set before breaking back en route to levelling the set. The errors suddenly started to flow again from Alcaraz's racquet and a wild forehand followed by an excellent Ruud return gave the sixth seed the chance to serve for the match. Ruud closed it out in style on his third match point with an ace, completing a run of five straight games.

The visitors led 77-72 with three minutes and 59 seconds left in the third quarter before the Lakers went on a 16-5 run and from then on they controlled the game. Elsewhere, Stephen Curry hit seven of his 13 three-point efforts, finishing with 36 points as the Golden State Warriors beat Oklahoma City 127-116. But Giannis Antetokounmpo's 43 points were in vain as the Milwaukee Bucks lost 113-107 to the Boston Celtics. Jayson Tatum had 31

Davis and LeBron James help Lakers beat Raptors

NEW YORK (Agencies): Anthony Davis and LeBron James starred as the Los Angeles Lakers rallied to claim a 123-103 victory over the visiting Toronto Raptors. Davis scored 22 points in 26 minutes before leaving the game with an eye injury in the third quarter as he tried to block a shot by the Raptors' Jakob Poeltl. The 31-year-old sustained a number of eye injuries last season, suffering a corneal abrasion in March against the Golden State Warriors before being hit again in

the left eye in April against the Minnesota Timberwolves. James added 19 points, 16 assists and 10 rebounds for his second consecutive triple-double, with the 39-year-old becoming the oldest player in NBA history to achieve the feat. It was his third triple-double of the season and the 115th of his career. The Raptors led 34-26 at the end of the first quarter and were 10 points ahead (48-38) in the second quarter before the Lakers hit back to cut the gap to 55-53 at the

interval. The visitors led 77-72 with three minutes and 59 seconds left in the third quarter before the Lakers went on a 16-5 run and from then on they controlled the game. Elsewhere, Stephen Curry hit seven of his 13 three-point efforts, finishing with 36 points as the Golden State Warriors beat Oklahoma City 127-116. But Giannis Antetokounmpo's 43 points were in vain as the Milwaukee Bucks lost 113-107 to the Boston Celtics. Jayson Tatum had 31

points and 12 rebounds for the reigning NBA champions, who have won nine of their opening 11 games but are still two games behind the unbeaten Cleveland Cavaliers in the Eastern Conference. Payton Pritchard scored 18 points off the bench for Boston with Derrick White and former Buck Jrue Holiday adding 15 points each and Jaylen Brown hitting 14. Greek star Antetokounmpo also claimed 13 rebounds and elbowed Brown to the floor at one point, offering a hand to help him up



only to pull it away when Brown reached for it.

"Giannis is a child," said Brown. "I'm just

focused on helping my team get a win."



In brief

IRSA releases 106,300 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 106,300 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 52,400 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1516.36 feet and was 118.36 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 28,100 cusecs and 55,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1175.45 feet, which was 125.45 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 5,000 cusecs and 32,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 57,500, 49,000, 36,800 and 4,200 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 10,000 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 3,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Smoke awareness walk held

RAWALPINDI (APP): The City Traffic Police (CTP) Rawalpindi, in collaboration with a private pharmaceutical company, on Monday organized a smog awareness walk. The walk held under the instructions of City Police Officer Beenish Fatima, was aimed at creating awareness among the public about the causes of smog, its harmful effects on human health and its prevention as per the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, a police spokesman said. Speaking to the participants, the DSP Traffic Headquarters said that the public should avoid plying vehicles that emit excessive smoke and ensure use of masks. "We all have to work together for controlling smog as it is extremely harmful to human health, especially children," he added. He further said that under the CTO's directions, the traffic police were taking actions against the vehicles emitting excess smoke to prevent further pollution.

ICT Police apprehend 39 from sheesha cafe

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police's Shalimar teams on Monday apprehended 39 individuals in a targeted operation against illegal sheesha cafes and seized sheesha equipment, hookahs, various flavors, and weapons with ammunition from the suspects. A police spokesperson told APP that, Shalimar Police teams intensified crackdown against the Sheesha centers in order to eliminate this menace from the city and special efforts were also taken against the accused involved in immoral activities. In this regard, the Shalimar police station team apprehended 39 accused during the crackdown against sheesha cafes. Police team also recovered sheesha, hookah, flavors and weapons with ammunition from their possessions. The arrested accused was also shifted to the police station for further legal proceedings. DIG Syed Ali Raza said that the Islamabad Police is actively working to ensure the safety of citizens' lives and property, emphasizing that no elements will be allowed to disrupt citizens' peace. Protecting the lives, property, and dignity of citizens is the Islamabad Police's top priority, DIG added. Citizens are urged to report any suspicious activities to the relevant police station, emergency helpline "Pukar-15" to help make the city crime-free through cooperation between the police and the public.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Chaudhry Salik Hussain addressing two-day Pakistan's National Tripartite Labour Conference.

Matches between celebrities promotes harmony: Kundi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi, on Monday participated as the chief guest in a memorable cricket match between the Anchors XI and Showbiz XI at Diamond Cricket Ground Islamabad.

The match, which featured popular TV anchors and celebrities from the entertainment industry, also saw the presence of several notable figures, including Sindh government's spokesperson and Mayor of Sukkur, Barrister Arsalan

Sheikh, Sweet Home's founder Zamurd Khan, and President of Centaurus Group of Companies, Sardar Rashid Ilyas.

Governor Kundi interacted with the players and applauded their excellent performances during the match. He highlighted that such events not only provide healthy entertainment but also promote harmony and friendship among individuals from different sectors.

He emphasized that sporting activities foster positive thinking in society

and encourage youth to engage in healthier activities. The Governor further said that the promotion of sports is a priority for the government, and efforts are being made to develop sports facilities across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

"We plan to invite teams from across the country to participate in cricket matches at the KP Governor House," he added. On the occasion, Kundi also distributed awards to the players who showcased outstanding performances during the match.

DIG Raza organises open court

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) Syed Ali Raza and Superintendent of Police (SP) City Zone Shehzad Akbar held a khuli kachehri (open court) on Monday at Kohsar Police Station, with a large number of traders and citizens in attendance.

The DIG and SP City listened to the citizens' issues and issued immediate instructions for their resolution; a public relation officer told APP. He said Islamabad Police is committed to resolving citizens' problems through various forums by reaching out to the public.

IG Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi has ordered that all zonal SPs hold khuli kachehri in their respective zones, enabling any citizen of Islamabad to openly share their concerns. This public outreach campaign by Islamabad Police aims to resolve citizens' issues at their doorstep.

IESCO notifies power shutdown programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Monday issued power suspension programme for Tuesday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work.

According to IESCO Spokesperson, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 08:00 AM to 12:00 Noon EME Complex, Jhangi, P&T Wani, Alamabad, Jhanda feeders will remain closed due to installation of AMI meters. From 09:00 AM to 02:00 AM, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Qureshiabad, Girja-1, Ranyal, Zaraj-1&2, Zeta-1, Dhok Awan, Mora Nagyal Feeders, Islamabad Circle, Taramari, Lahtrar Road, Kund Rajgan, Chhata Bakhtawar, PC, DCCP, MCM, Gharial, Kohala, Sunny Bank Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle, Tamasabad, Dhok Hukamdad Feeders, Chakwal Circle, Ara Bazar Feeder, GSO Circle from 06:30 AM to 06:30 PM RCC II, III, IV, 132 KV New Rawat Grid Station, from 09:00 AM to 04:00 PM, Khanna Dak, Burma, Tiramari, Southern Road, ISI, Curry Road, Alnoor Colony, Wahidabad, Lahtrar Road Feeders and surrounding areas.

Delegation from West African Countries studies BISP initiatives

ISLAMABAD (APP): A high level delegation from West African Countries Monday visited Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) headquarters to learn from the social protection initiatives implemented under this largest programme and its impacts on the marginalized segments.

The delegation was welcomed by the Chairperson BISP, Senator Rubina Khalid, and Secretary BISP, Amer Ali Ahmad. The delegation belonged from Burkina Faso, Mali, Senegal, and Niger.

The delegation is on a four-day study tour from November 11 to 14, 2024, in collaboration with the World Food Program and the World Bank, aiming to learn from BISP's initiatives in social protection for disadvantaged sections of society.

In her welcoming remarks, Chairperson

Rubina Khalid described BISP as Pakistan's flagship social protection program, inspired by the vision of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto and launched in 2008 by then-President Asif Ali Zardari. She explained that BISP uniquely identifies 9.3 million low-income women across Pakistan using the CNIC system. The female head of each eligible household is entitled to financial assistance, with Form 'B' made mandatory for program registration.

During the briefing, Senator Rubina Khalid expressed optimism about the tour, noting that it will be mutually beneficial for Pakistan and the visiting countries. She highlighted the importance of sharing experiences in socio-economic upliftment and said BISP looks forward to building upon this relationship in the future.

Secretary BISP, Amer Ali Ahmad, emphasized that the focus of the study tour would be on the National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER) database of eligible households and BISP's payment system.

The delegation will also visit the Benazir One Window Center and BISP field offices for a firsthand view of BISP operations. Mrs. Colonel Assa Badiello Toure, Minister of Health and Social Development from Mali, and Mr. Amedee BAMOUNI, Permanent Secretary of the National Council for Social Protection from Burkina Faso, thanked Pakistan and BISP for organizing the study tour.

They expressed keen interest in learning from BISP's expertise in social protection and its impact on marginalized segments of society.

ANF seizes over 17 kg drugs in six operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting six operations across the country managed to recover over 17 kg drugs worth over Rs 8.6 million and arrested six accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Monday.

He informed that 2.5 kg heroin and 3.5 kg ice were recovered from the possession of an accused arrested near Tench Bhatta in Rawalpindi.

The accused confessed

to selling drugs to the students of educational institutions.

In another operation, 6 kg hashish was recovered from an accused held near Super Highway, Karachi.

2.4 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of a 9 to 10 year old child involved in drug trafficking, arrested in Glottian Mor, Daska in Sialkot.

1.2 kg hashish was recovered from a drug dealer rounded up at Indus

Chowrangi, in Korangi area Karachi.

1.1 kg heroin and a drone were recovered from an accused netted from a housing society in Lahore.

In sixth operation, 420 grams opium was recovered from an accused on M-1 Motorway Islamabad.

Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations are under process.



ISLAMABAD: A view of thick fog creating low visibility in the Federal Capital. —APP Photo

Role of Parliament vital to tackle challenges: Gilani

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani on Monday highlighted the pressing challenges humanity faces, including climate change, sustainable development, and socio-economic disparities.

The Chairman Senate was speaking as a chief guest at the inaugural session of the 10th Annual National Parliamentary Development Course at the Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services (PIPS).

He said that the role of parliament and parliamentarians has become increasingly crucial in steering the country toward achieving its strategic national and international objectives. He said that members of Parliament are the people's representatives, entrusted by the Constitution with the great responsibility of

empathizing with the masses.

He observed that Parliamentary work has become a specialized service that necessitates proficient and professional support from officers well-versed in cross-disciplinary concepts and practices.

"You must take pride in the responsibility bestowed upon you to serve and provide technical assistance to the elected representatives. Your role is crucial in guiding the nation's progress towards the well-being of its citizens, aiming for a secure, prosperous, and happy future for our coming generations" Gilani remarked while highlighting the importance of the training course.

He called upon the participants to make full use of this robust and comprehensive training program designed to advance under-

standing of the Constitution, the Parliamentary Rules of Procedure, and the Government Rules of Business 1973.

He commended the PIPS administration and team for their pivotal role in empowering parliamentary officers with relevant and practical knowledge. The chairman expressed best wishes to the course participants and hoped they would exploit this learning and networking opportunity towards a new destiny as professionals par excellence, offering quality-oriented services to the Parliamentary institutions.

A highly diversified cohort of mid-career officers from the federal parliament and provincial assemblies, as well as Legislative Assemblies of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan and the Parliament, is participating in the course.



ISLAMABAD: A young artist sketches at his stall, showcasing his talent to attract customers during Lok Mela, the Folk Festival at Lok Virsa. —APP Photo

Haroon terms education must for country's development

KARACHI (APP): Former Representative of Pakistan to United Nations Organization (UNO) and Pakistan Movement leader Abdullah Hussain Haroon on Monday termed education very important for the development of the country.

Sindh Madressatul Islam inherits a historic background from where his grandfather Sir Abdullah Haroon and other great personalities had received their early education, Hussain Haroon stated this while delivering lecture titled "My Experiences and Encounters" under popular lecture series of Sindh Madressatul Islam University.

Haroon narrated his early education in Karachi, services of his family in education, social work, politics, diplomacy and philanthropy, his professional career at national and international level, issues of education and environmental and Karachi's past and present days.

Abdullah Hussain Haroon paid great tribute to SMI's founding father Khan Bahadur Hassanally Effendi and teachers. He termed education a very important for development of the country.

Hussain Haroon, who also served as Speaker Sindh Assembly, said his grandfather Sir Abdullah Haroon along with Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah had highly contributed in making of Pakistan, and he was a close associate of Quaid-e-Azam.

He said Aga Khan and his grandfather Sir Abdullah Haroon had financially supported Aligarh university in the days when it was facing a

financial crisis.

Talking on his family's parliamentary role Abdullah Hussain Haroon said his family had played a significant role in the parliamentary politics and among them were Sir Abdullah Haroon, Yousuf Haroon and he himself. He said in the time of Yousuf Haroon as the Chief Minister Sindh in 1950 the Sindh Assembly had passed the Tenancy Act, in which a farmer was given right of equal share in agriculture product.

He also shared his views about the history and environmental issues of Karachi city and said this city has beautiful buildings including the buildings of Sindh Madressatul Islam, which were mostly built in colonial period. Now Karachi is a huge populated city, where especially serious environmental issues are surfaced. "A large number of residents of Karachi are sick due to environmental pollution. Wind, water and food borne diseases are horrible in the city," Abdullah Hussain Haroon said and added that rubbish of the city is also going in the sea since over last 100 years and making it polluted. Therefore, he suggested that specially our youth must be aware about environmental issues and the concerned departments should play their due role in this respect.

He was of the view that those great writers who have penned down remarkable books, were mostly not degree holders, but they had a great thought. This is why, there should be debating halls in universities, where original concepts be discussed. He also remembered his friend late

Nisar Ali Effendi, grandson of Hassanally Effendi and called him a very honourable person.

Talking on the role of UNO, the former representative of Pakistan at UN, said it is a useful international institution where a representative of any country can approach for conflict resolution or any other help. He opined that there is no any other international institution that could replace it. He said although there are many expectations from the UNO, which it was not fulfilling but it is an important world forum.

Earlier, Dr. Mubeen Sahrai, Vice Chancellor of SMU in his introductory speech introduced the guest with audience and said Sir Abdullah Haroon had great attachment with his Alma-Mater Sindh Madressatul Islam and was supporting it and its students.

He said Haroon family is known for its contributions to Pakistan's political and social landscape and Abdullah Hussain Haroon has long been active in social and charitable causes in Pakistan. He has supported numerous initiatives in education, health-care, and community development through his work with various charitable organizations, including the Haroon Charitable Foundation.

Dr. Jamshed Adil Halepoto moderated the session, while Ms. Zonaira Jalali conducted the proceedings.

In the end Dr. Mubeen Sahrai presented a shield to the guest. Deans, chairpersons, faculty, sectionals heads of administrative departments and students attended the session in a large number.

Mayor calls for quality, speed

KABUL (BNA): Mawlawi Abdul Rashid, Mayor of Kabul, has inspected the ongoing asphalt work on the second section of the Khair Khana Pass road. According to a statement from the Kabul Municipality, during his inspection of the road in Kabul's 17th district, Mayor Abdul Rashid stressed the importance of quality and the acceleration of work. He urged the contracting company to complete the asphalt paving of one lane before the snowfall, allowing it to open for traffic.

Services remain operational

KABUL (Amu TV): Afghanistan's Embassy in Australia has announced that its consular services remain operational despite what it described as efforts by the Taliban to disrupt the embassy's functions. In a statement on Monday, the Afghanistan's embassy in Australia said that the Taliban have attempted to interfere with the consular activities of diplomatic missions representing the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in recent months.

Water shortage, drought in Zabul forces families to leave homes

ZABUL (TOLONews): Several families in Meezan district of Zabul have been forced to leave their homes due to a decline in ground-water levels. Residents of the Makark area in this district say that due to the lack of water management and ongoing droughts, they are facing serious challenges. According to them, groundwater levels have now dropped to 250 meters, and without the construction of retention dams, they will be forced to leave their homes.

Abdullah, a resident of Meezan district in Zabul, said, "In this area, finding water has become very difficult, and people are struggling even to find clean drinking water."

Sayed Gul, another resident of Meezan district, added, "Our request is for dams to be built near residential areas to control water and for the supply of drinking water to be prioritized."

Local officials have begun constructing a retention dam in each district of this province to increase groundwater levels.

Hekmatullah Rahbar, head of Zabul's Rural Rehabilitation and Development Department, said, "Based on a special directive from the leadership of the Islamic Emirate, a dam will be built in every district of Zabul to control water, raise groundwater levels, and alleviate people's problems."

The recent droughts have had a severe impact on the people of Zabul, most of whom rely on agriculture for their livelihoods, leaving lasting negative effects on their lives.

Over 37,000 acres of land reclaimed: Ministry

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Justice has reported the reclamation of more than 37,000 acres of state land over the past month. According to the ministry's statement, this land was reclaimed from thirteen provinces, with the majority located in Takhar province.

Barakatullah Rasooli, spokesperson for the Ministry of Justice, stated that the reclaimed lands are situated in the provinces of Nangarhar, Kunduz, Takhar, Parwan, Ghor, Panjshir, Laghman, Sar-e Pol, Samangan, Badghis, and Maidan Wardak, and that after assessment, they were reclaimed and handed over to the relevant authorities.

The spokesperson said: "In the month of Rabi' al-

Thani, year 1446, technical teams dedicated to preventing land usurpation reclaimed over 37,429 acres of Emirate land across thirteen provinces, which have since been handed over to the relevant departments."

He added that these technical teams have also identified over 520,000 acres of state land across 24 provinces over the past month.

According to Barakatullah Rasooli, more than 787,000 acres of land in 31 provinces are currently under review by the Ministry of Finance.

Salim Paigir, a political analyst, said: "Over the past 43 years, both public and private lands have been seized by powerful individuals. The duty of the Islamic Emirate is to

reclaim these lands from those who seized them and allocate them to those in need, especially returning migrants."

Moeen Gul Samkani, another political analyst, said: "We know of individuals who lack anyone to advocate for their confiscated lands and cannot afford legal assistance. We urge the government to address these cases so that rightful owners ultimately regain their property."

According to Ministry of Justice officials, the assessment, identification, and reclamation process of state lands is ongoing in all provinces.

Previously, the Ministry of Justice had also reported the review of over 17,000 acres of land in Kabul and several other provinces.

Herat businesswomen seek more exhibitions



HERAT (TOLONews): Several female entrepreneurs in Herat say that the reduction in exhibitions has negatively affected the marketing and sales of their products. These women are also requesting easier access to participate in international exhibitions.

In Herat, a group of women manage a small factory where fresh fruits are processed, dried, and packaged in a standard manner, employing ten women and girls.

Sadiqa Sadiq Yar, the head of this fruit processing factory, said, "The lack of exhibitions has caused us many challenges. In previous years, there used to be three to four exhibitions held annually, but this year, we only had one."

Maliba, an employee of this factory, said: "Participation in exhibitions helps our products gain better recognition. Our request is for more exhibitions to be held to support business growth."

Tarana, an employee at the fruit processing factory, said: "The work environment is very suitable for us since it's a women-only space, and it's a task that women can perform well."

The Herat Chamber of Commerce and Investment assures support for expanding the work and business opportunities for female entrepreneurs in this province.

According to officials from the chamber, there are no restrictions on women

entrepreneurs participating in domestic and international exhibitions.

Mohammad Amin Yusuf, the executive director of the Herat Chamber of Commerce and Investment, said: "Female entrepreneurs can continue their business activities just like men, and there are no prohibitions against them. They are supported by institutions and the private sector."

Over the past two years, women-led businesses in Herat have grown significantly, with hundreds of women entering commercial activities. However, economic challenges and a lack of sales markets remain among the main obstacles facing these women.

Afghan Consulate begins passport issuance

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Afghanistan Consulate in Mumbai has announced the commencement of passport issuance.

According to the announcement posted on the consulate's X/ Twitter account, passport issuance will begin on Monday.

The consulate stated, "The distribution of passports by the Afghanistan Consulate General in Mumbai will start from November 11, 2024, to

meet the needs of Afghan citizens." This announcement comes amid reports by the Sunday Guardian, an Indian newspaper, that India is considering accepting a representative named Ikramuddin Kamil as the Deputy Consul General for the Afghanistan Consulate in Mumbai, representing the Taliban.

According to the report, Kamil recently entered India on a regular passport. The report, published on

Sunday, November 10, indicates that Delhi may take a significant step towards strengthening diplomatic relations with the Taliban by potentially accepting their representative in India.

The initiation of passport issuance by the Afghanistan Consulate in Mumbai marks a crucial step in addressing Afghan citizens' needs and shows the growing relations between India and the Taliban.

Iran executes Afghan prisoner amid rising execution rates

KABUL (Khaama Press): Following a rise in the execution of Afghan citizens in Iran, the human rights organization "Halvash" has reported the execution of an Afghan citizen in Zahedan prison.

The organization stated that this Afghan prisoner had been sentenced to death on charges related to "drug offenses."

According to Halvash, the individual was identified as Mohammad Nabi Popalzai, a 28-year-old Afghan citizen.

Reports indicate that executions in Iran, including those of Afghan citizens, have seen a significant increase.

Recently, the Iran Human Rights Organization announced that in October alone, Iran executed at least 166 individuals, including 13 Afghan citizens.

This figure marks the highest monthly execution count in Iran over the past two decades.

The increase in executions has sparked widespread reactions and criticism.

Human Rights Watch also condemned the alarming rise in executions in Iran, calling for the abolition of the death penalty.

According to the Islamic Republic's statistics, currently, 5,399 Afghan citizens are held in various Iranian prisons on various criminal charges.

The surge in executions has intensified calls for reform from human rights groups, urging Iran to halt the death penalty.

The growing number of Afghan prisoners in Iran highlights ongoing concerns about fair trials and the treatment of foreign nationals.

Afghanistan among 10 most climate vulnerable countries, UN

KABUL (Amu TV): Despite contributing minimally to global greenhouse gas emissions, Afghanistan is among the 10 most climate-vulnerable countries, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

The agency noted on X that Afghanistan accounts for just 0.1 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions.

The statement comes as the United Nations climate change conference began Monday in Baku, Azerbaijan. OCHA urged attendees at the conference to take immediate steps to support communities affected by climate change.

The Taliban also sent a delegation, led by Matiul Haq Khalis, head of their Environmental Protection Agency, to attend the event. Speaking at Kabul International Airport before his departure, Khalis said, "Since the establishment and victory of the Islamic Emirate [Taliban], this is the first time we have been invited to such a conference. We will strive to participate in various forums and address the challenges Afghanistan faces due to its vulnerability to climate change."

The two-day U.N.-hosted conference in Baku runs from Monday to Tuesday and features representatives from nearly 200 countries. While the U.N. has permitted the Taliban delegation's participation, neither the organization nor the attending nations officially recognize the Taliban as Afghanistan's legitimate government.

The climate conference in Azerbaijan is part of the global effort to address one of the most pressing challenges of our time. This year's event has drawn leaders and diplomats from around the world, although notable absences include representatives from the United States, China, France, and India.

Meeting explores plans for precious stones processing center in Kabul



KABUL (BNA): The Ministry of Mines and Petroleum convened a high-level meeting to discuss the establishment of a processing center for precious and semi-precious stones in Kabul.

The Acting Minister of Mines and Petroleum Mullah Hidayatullah Badri, Acting Minister of Economy Qari Din Mohammad Hanif, Kabul Mayor Mawlawi Abdul Rashid, Deputy Minister of Planning and Policy from the Ministry of Finance Engineer Sultan Mohammad Zubair, Head of Finance in the Economic Affairs Directorate Hafiz Mohammad, and other senior officials were in attendance.

The attendees engaged in comprehensive discussions on various aspects of establishing the processing center, including the export of processed stones to international markets, the issuance of mining permits, the creation of dedicated sales centers for precious stones, and the logistics of transporting stones to marketing centers.

Additionally, the meeting covered the assessment and revenue potential of Afghanistan's gemstone resources.

Acting Minister of Mines and Petroleum Mullah Hidayatullah Badri emphasized Afghanistan's rich reserves of precious and semi-precious stones and pledged full legal support and cooperation in advancing this sector.

Air pollution concerns Kabul residents with onset of winter

KABUL (TOLONews): Some residents of the capital city are worried about the impending air pollution this winter.

Several of these residents emphasize the need for public cooperation with the government to prevent the burning of low-quality fuels to heat their homes.

"Coal usage should be minimized to prevent further pollution, as in recent years many illnesses have emerged in Kabul, claiming lives of some individuals," said Ghulam Mohammad, a resident of Kabul.

Meanwhile, some doctors warn that air pollution leads to various diseases among the country's citizens.

"Air pollution is one of the biggest issues of today's world, posing a threat to human health and causing respiratory, immune, and even cancerous diseases," said Ahmad Shagib Zaheer, a doctor.

However, officials at the National Environmental Protection Agency state that they will implement a six-month plan from the beginning of Mizan (September) to the end of Hoot (March) in the current solar year to prevent air pollution.

"The National Environmental Protection Agency has presented a six-month plan starting from Mizan (September) and continuing through to the end of

Hoot (March)," said Toofan Jebran, head of Pollution Regulation and Control at National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA).

Previously, the head of Pollution Regulation and Control at NEPA had mentioned that high-rise buildings, factories, and old vehicles contributing to air pollution would be closely monitored and managed in Kabul and six other major provinces.

UN Special Envoy highlights development potential in Panjshir

PANJSHIR (BNA): In a meeting with Hafiz Mohammad Agha Hakim, the Governor of Panjshir, Ms. Roza Otunbayeva, the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy, emphasized the international community's interest in the region's natural resources and development opportunities.

During her visit, Otunbayeva praised Panjshir as an ideal location for various development projects and expressed the UN's readiness to assist in areas such as health, education, agriculture, environment, and technical mining extraction. She noted the positive human rights situation, security, and peaceful atmosphere in the province, which she believes are conducive to project implementation.

Governor Hakim welcomed the UN Envoy's visit and advocated for the involvement of leading international organizations and donors to support infrastructure development in Panjshir. He highlighted the significant improvements in security under the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, stating that drug cultivation and trafficking

have been eradicated in the province.

Additionally, the Governor addressed the critical issue of inadequate healthcare services, identifying the provincial hospital's shortcomings as a major challenge. Otunbayeva acknowledged these concerns and reiterated her commitment to resolving the issues facing the province.

WFP reports modest gains in Afghanistan food security

KABUL (Amu TV): Afghanistan's food security situation has shown slight improvements, according to a new report by the World Food Program (WFP), but significant concerns remain as winter approaches.

The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) indicates that nearly a quarter of the population, approximately 11.6 million people, are experiencing crisis and emergency levels of food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or higher). While this figure marks a decline from 15.3 million in 2023, food needs in the country remain alarmingly high.

The WFP attributes the marginal improvement to extensive humanitarian assistance, which has staved off more severe food shortages. However, the upcoming winter months are expected to exacerbate the situation, with food insecurity projected to affect 14.8 million people—about 32 percent of the population—from November 2024 to March 2025. Contributing factors include persistent unemployment, household debt, low income levels, an influx of returnees from neighboring countries, and fluctuating food prices. The anticipated La Niña conditions in 2025 are also expected to negatively impact agricultural and livestock productivity, underscoring the sustained need for food assistance.

Prepositioning food supplies for winter

To mitigate the impact of harsh winter conditions, the WFP has prepositioned 85 percent of its targeted food supplies, distributing over 52,610 metric tons for 1.5 million people, with nearly half of the wheat flour sourced locally. Provinces known for heavy snowfall, including Badakhshan, Bامyan, Ghor, and Daikundi, have been prioritized for these efforts. This prepositioning aims to secure food supplies before access to these areas becomes restricted. The distribution efforts are set to be completed by November, and cooperating partners have nearly finalized beneficiary verification.

Alarming malnutrition rates

The report also highlights escalating malnutrition, a severe consequence of funding shortages that have forced the WFP to reduce food assistance and preventive services. By 2025, an estimated 3.5 million children under five and 1.15 million pregnant and breastfeeding women are projected to suffer from acute malnutrition, representing a 28 percent rise in moderately acute malnourished children compared to 2024.

The report says that stunting, which affects long-term health and development, is expected to impact nearly 2.95 million children. Poor diets, inadequate immunization coverage, limited access to health services, and poor water and sanitation conditions are among the key drivers of this crisis.

Impact of morality law on humanitarian operations

The WFP has expressed concern over the new morality law implemented by the Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, which has been monitored closely for its impact on humanitarian work, particularly on the participation of Afghan women in aid operations.

The northeast, west, and southern regions have seen increased oversight to enforce compliance, posing challenges to the inclusion of women in the workforce and further restricting their personal freedoms, the report says.

WFP's response involves prioritizing staff safety, strengthening monitoring measures, and engaging with local authorities to maintain access and support inclusive operations. Despite the mounting difficulties, the World Food Program (WFP) continues to emphasize the importance of a multisectoral approach to sustain and expand food and nutrition assistance and avoid reversing recent progress.

The organization currently faces a funding gap of \$787 million for its operations from November 2024 to April 2025, highlighting the urgent need for continued international support.





AMSTERDAM: Police officials arresting a pro-Palestinian protester during a demonstration against Israeli attack on Gaza.

Israel says ‘certain progress’ on Lebanon ceasefire

JERUSALEM/BEIRUT (Reuters): Israel said on Monday there was progress in talks about a Lebanon ceasefire and indicated Russia could play a part by stopping Hezbollah rearming via Syria, although the Iran-backed group said it had not received any new truce proposals.

Pummeled by Israel's offensive, Hezbollah said diplomatic contacts were under way involving its backers in Tehran, Washington and Moscow, whilst reiterating its readiness to fight on, saying it had enough weapons for a "long war." In Jerusalem, Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar said the war against Hezbollah was not yet over. The main challenge facing any ceasefire deal would be enforcement, he said, though there was "a certain progress" in talks.

After previous rounds of fruitless, US-led diplomacy to secure a Lebanon truce, the comments indicate renewed focus on the issue as President Joe Biden prepares to leave office in January, with President-elect Donald Trump set to replace him. Hopes of a Gaza truce have meanwhile suffered a setback, with Qatar suspending its mediation role.

Ignited by the Gaza war, the conflict at the Lebanese-Israeli border had been rumbling on for a year before Israel went on the offensive in late September, pounding wide areas of Lebanon with airstrikes and sending troops into the south. Saar, addressing a Jerusalem news conference, said Israel was working with United States on a ceasefire. Israel wants Hezbollah north of the Litani river — some 20 miles (30 km) from the border — and unable to rearm, he said.

Saar said a basic principle for any agreement had to be that Hezbollah would not be able to bring weapons into Lebanon from Syria. "It is vital to the success of any arrangement in Lebanon," he said. "And the Russians are, as you know, present in Syria. And if they are in agreement with this principle, I think they can contribute effectively to this objective."

Russia deployed forces into Syria nearly a decade ago to support President Bashar Assad in the civil war there. Hezbollah also sent fighters to help Assad, and carved out big sway on the ground alongside other Iran-backed groups. Syria is widely seen as a major conduit for Iran to supply weapons to Hezbollah in Lebanon, and Israel has struck targets in Syria regularly during the conflict. An Israeli airstrike temporarily cut Syria's main Homs-Damascus highway on Monday, Syrian media reported. In Lebanon, relatives held funerals for 20 people killed in a strike on the southern town of Deir Qanoun-Ras Al-Ain, including seven medics from rescue groups affiliated with Hezbollah and its Shiite ally Amal.

In Beirut, Hezbollah official Mohammad Afif linked intensified political contacts to the looming change of US leadership. "There is a great movement between Washington and Moscow and Tehran and a number of capitals," he said. "We hear a lot of talk, but so far, according to my information, nothing official has reached Lebanon or us in this regard," he told a news conference. The contacts were "in the phase of testing the waters and presenting initial ideas."

Israel Hayom reported on Sunday that substantial progress has been

made in diplomatic negotiations over a proposed Lebanon ceasefire that would require Hezbollah to withdraw north of the Litani River, barring its military presence near the Israeli border, while the IDF would return to the international border. Yedioth Ahronoth, Israel's best-selling newspaper, reported on Monday that Israel and Lebanon have exchanged drafts through US envoy Amos Hochstein, signaling progress in efforts to reach a final agreement.

The Lebanese government, which includes Hezbollah, has repeatedly called for a ceasefire based on the full implementation of a UN Resolution that ended a war between the group and Israel in 2006. The resolution calls for the area south of the Litani river to be free of all weapons other than those of the Lebanese state. Lebanon and Israel have accused each other of violating the resolution.

Israel says its campaign aims to secure the return home of tens of thousands of people forced to evacuate the north due to rockets fired by Hezbollah, which opened fire on Oct. 8, 2003, in solidarity with Hamas. Israel's offensive has forced more than 1 million people to flee their homes in Lebanon in the last seven weeks. Since the eruption of hostilities a year ago, Israeli attacks have killed more than 3,189 people in Lebanon, the vast majority of them since late September, according to health ministry figures, which do not distinguish between civilians and combatants. Hezbollah attacks have killed roughly 100 civilians and soldiers in northern Israel, the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, and southern Lebanon over the last year.

Oil, ghee prices see massive hike

F.P. Report

LAHORE: In a major blow to household budgets, prices of cooking oil and ghee have risen sharply in Nov 2024, with a hike of up to Rs60 per kilogram in the open market.

The increase comes even as the country recently recorded a slight decline in its inflation rate. According to market reports, the price of first-grade ghee and cooking oil has surged by Rs54 per kg, while the rates for second and third-grade varieties have spiked by Rs60 per kg.

This steep rise has pushed the retail price of first-grade ghee and oil from Rs505 to Rs559 per kg, leaving consumers grappling with soaring costs. The price for second-grade ghee, which was previously set at Rs440 per kg, has now jumped to Rs500. Meanwhile, the retail prices for ghee in general have reached between Rs525 and Rs530 per kg, depending on the area. Additionally, the price of second-grade oil, formerly priced at Rs452 per litre, has surged to Rs512, with some vendors reportedly selling it between Rs530 and Rs540 per litre.

Kremlin denies Trump spoke with Putin on Kyiv

MOSCOW (Reuters): US President-elect Donald Trump spoke with Russian President Vladimir Putin and advised him not to escalate the Ukraine war, a source familiar with the conversation said, but the Kremlin denied the two had spoken. The source told Reuters that Trump, who has criticised the scale of US military and financial support for Kyiv and said he will end the war quickly, had spoken to Putin in recent days.

The Washington Post first reported the call had taken place, citing unidentified sources, and said Trump had told Putin that he should not escalate the Ukraine war. But, in an unusual move, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Monday no such call had taken place.

"This is completely untrue. This is pure fiction, it's just false information," he told reporters. "There was no conversation." "This is the most obvious example of the quality of the information that is being published now, sometimes even in fairly reputable publications," he said. Asked whether

Putin had plans for any contacts with Trump, Peskov said: "There are no concrete plans yet." Trump spoke to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy last Wednesday. Asked about the purported Trump-Putin call, Steven Cheung, Trump's communications director, said: "We do not comment on private calls between President Trump and other world leaders." Republican Trump will take office on January 20 after winning the November 5 presidential election. Biden has invited Trump to the Oval Office on Wednesday, the White House said.

US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said on Sunday Biden's top message would be his commitment to ensure a peaceful transfer of power, and he will also talk to Trump about what's happening in Europe, Asia and the Middle East. "President Biden will have the opportunity over the next 70 days to make the case to the Congress and to the incoming administration that the United States should not

walk away from Ukraine, that walking away from Ukraine means more instability in Europe," Sullivan told CBS News' "Face the Nation" show.

Sullivan was asked whether Biden would ask Congress to pass legislation to authorize more funding for Ukraine. "I'm not here to put forward a specific legislative proposal. President Biden will make the case that we do need ongoing resources for Ukraine beyond the end of his term," he said. Washington has provided tens of billions of dollars worth of US military and economic aid to Ukraine since it was invaded by Russia in February 2022, funding that Trump has repeatedly criticised and rallied against with other Republican lawmakers.

Trump said last year that if he had been in the White House at the time, Putin would not have invaded Ukraine. He told Reuters Ukraine may have to cede territory to reach a peace agreement, something Kiev rejects and Biden has never suggested.

Japan's PM survives parliament vote

TOKYO (AFP): Japanese legislators have voted for Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba to stay on, after his scandal-tarnished coalition lost its parliamentary majority in a lower house election last month. Following the parliament's vote on Monday, Ishiba must run a fragile minority government as Donald Trump regains control in main ally the United States, tension rises with rivals China and North Korea, and domestic pressure mounts to rein in the cost of living.

Ishiba, 67, took office six weeks ago and held a snap election on October 27, hoping to shore up his mandate as leader of the conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). But voters, unhappy with inflation and a slush fund scandal that helped sink his predecessor

Fumio Kishida, delivered a blow to the LDP and its junior coalition partner.

Japan's opposition parties are divided on key issues, stopping them mounting a credible challenge to Ishiba. In a run-off — the first since 1994 — Ishiba won 221 votes against 160 for Yoshihiko Noda, head of the main opposition Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan (CDP). Eighty-four votes were discounted because they named other politicians. "This chamber names Shigeru Ishiba... as the prime minister," announced lower house speaker Fukushima Nukaga, as Ishiba bowed to his fellow legislators who applauded.

Despite losing its majority in the October election, the LDP coalition remains the largest bloc in the 465-seat

lower house. The prime minister will announce a new cabinet later on Monday, which will be ceremonially approved by the emperor. To have enough sway to pass legislation going forward, the ruling bloc has asked for help from the Democratic Party for the People (DPP), a small centrist group. The DPP has agreed to cooperate on a vote-by-vote basis while staying out of the coalition.

In talks with the LDP, the DPP has demanded tax cuts and energy subsidies that economists say would slash the government's revenues. "In order to stay in power, Ishiba needs to pass the government budget this winter," Tomoaki Iwai, professor emeritus at Nihon University, told the AFP news agency.

Zardari thanks Xi for goodwill message

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Monday extended gratitude to the Chinese President Xi Jinping for the goodwill message, adding that he would visit China in near future on a suitable date.

In his letter dated November 3, President Xi expressed concern over the President of Pakistan's injury and conveyed his best wishes for a speedy recovery, according to a press release issued by the President House Press Wing. Pakistan's cuisine President Xi, in his letter reaffirmed the deep friendship between Pakistan and China.

Chinese President Xi Jinping also extended a warm invitation for President Zardari to visit China. President Zardari stated that he was deeply moved by the messages inquiring his health by the leadership and people of China. "I will visit China in the near future at an appropriate time," the president said.

He said this visit will further strengthen the long-standing and ironclad bonds between the two countries. Both leaders highlighted the importance of the "All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership" between the two countries. President Xi emphasized the commitment to building a China-Pakistan community with a shared future in the new era. President Zardari thanked President Xi Jinping for his insight, leadership, and cooperation in advancing Pakistan-China relations.

Australian Army Chief calls on COAS

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Lieutenant General Simon Stuart, Chief of the Australian Army, met with General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS) of Pakistan, on Monday at the General Headquarters (GHQ).

During the meeting, both leaders engaged in discussions covering matters of mutual interest, particularly the global and regional security environment. The COAS emphasized Pakistan's appreciation for its ties with Australia, noting the importance of strong bilateral relations in promoting shared goals of peace and stability. Both sides reiterated their commitment to further strengthen cooperation in defense and security, recognizing the value of continued collaboration for regional and global peace.

Lieutenant General Stuart commended Pakistan's efforts in countering terrorism and expressed his resolve to deepen bilateral defense and security cooperation between the two countries. Earlier, upon his arrival at GHQ, the Chief of the Australian Army laid a floral wreath at the Yadgar-e-Shuhada to honor Pakistan's martyrs. He was accorded a warm welcome, with a smartly turned-out contingent of the Pakistan Army presenting a guard of honor to him.

Protest may secure Imran's release: Fawad

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Former federal minister Fawad Chaudhry stated that Imran Khan's family has to lead the protest to secure the release of the PTI founder.

Speaking to media, Chaudhry expressed concern over the lack of revolutionary leadership within PTI, noting that recent strategic decisions were poorly handled. Chaudhry acknowledged certain mistakes made by the party, emphasising that PTI's founder had no intent to undermine the party's image. Reflecting on PTI's Afghan policy stance, he stated that Imran Khan and Fazlur Rehman share similar positions on the matter.

Taking aim at Defence Minister Khawaja Asif, Chaudhry alleged that Asif "never speaks the truth" and that PTI's failure to build alliances with other parties. He further added that Bushra Bibi and Aleema Khan should come forward to clarify matters surrounding Imran Khan's recent actions, stressing that PTI does not support dynastic politics.

Worsening air quality puts 11m children in peril, warns UN

KARACHI (AA): The UN on Monday called for "urgent" and "greater" efforts to reduce air pollution and protect children's health, as over 11 million children under five years of age are exposed to this smog in Pakistan's Punjab province.

"I am extremely concerned about the well-being of young children who are forced to breathe polluted, toxic air. Over 11 million children under five years of age are exposed to this smog in the worst-affected districts," the UNICEF's representative in Islamabad, Abdullah Fadil, said in a statement.

The statement coincides with a string of desperate measures taken by the Punjab government to con-

tain the deadly smog that has wreathed the provincial capital Lahore, and several other districts over the past two weeks. The measures include the closure of schools, public parks, zoos, playgrounds, and museums, aside from cut in market hours.

Lahore, home to over 14 million people, regularly battles the cancer-causing smog, which is primarily blamed on the burning of stubble by farmers in Pakistan and neighboring India to clear their fields for plowing, and industrial and vehicular emissions.

The closure of schools, the UN agency said, has disrupted the learning of almost 16 million children in Punjab since Nov. 17. "The air pollution is so severe it is

now visible from space," the statement said. "Prior to these record-breaking levels of air pollution, about 12% of deaths in children under five in Pakistan were due to air pollution," it added.

Moreover, it went on to say, the potential impact of air pollutants can be extreme on babies' developing lungs and brains, while breathing in particulate air pollution can "damage brain tissue and undermine cognitive development - with lifelong implications and setbacks." "We cannot afford to let our babies breathe toxic air. We cannot let the health, education and well-being of millions of children suffer," he said, adding that we must take urgent action for the "sake of our children," it maintained.

Climate inaction no option: Romina

BAKU (APP): Coordinator to Prime Minister on Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam on Monday emphasised the urgency for unified global response to protect rapidly degenerating ecosystems, lives and livelihoods of the vulnerable communities and infrastructure.

"Time to respond the century's worst challenge to the sustainability of planet earth, human lives and ecosystems is running out fast and climate inaction is no option," the PM's coordinator Romina Khurshid highlighted while talking to media after plenary session of the two-week's annual UN-led global climate conference (COP29), which began today in Baku, Azerbaijan.

Romina Khurshid Alam is leading Pakistan's delegation at the climate conference, with emphasis to highlight Pakistan's commitment to global climate action and the country's actions for resilience building despite limited financial resources.

The 29th annual United Nations climate summit

kicked off with delegates from nearly 200 countries readying for tough talks on finance and trade, following a year of weather disasters that have stretched developing countries in their key demands for more funds to cope with exacerbating impacts of climate change. Here at the annual UN climate meeting, global leaders have converged hoping to contain rising global temperatures, which are making deadly events like the recent floods in Pakistan, India, Nepal and Spain far worse.

An overarching aim at this year's global climate meeting is agreeing on how to get more cash to poorer countries to help them curb their planet-warming gases and to help them cope with the worsening impacts of climate change. During her conversation with journalists, Romina Khurshid Alam called upon the world leaders to meet their pledges for climate finance for the developing countries.

"Here in Baku, we, however, must reach an agree-

ment on a new global climate finance goal to save the planet earth from devastating impacts of climate change. She also appealed for an "ambitious" new goal on providing climate funding to the world's poorer nations, urging leaders of rich countries, historically responsible for heat-trapping carbon emissions, to realise that climate finance is no charity which the developing countries are demanding for meeting their climate change adaptation and disaster resilience needs.

"We must understand that COP29 is the unmissable moment to chart a new path forward for everyone," the PM's climate aide Romina Khurshid Alam stressed. Talking to media, Ms. Alam said that a number of bilateral and multi-lateral meetings and events have been planned for engagement with global partners to invest in Pakistan's mitigation, adaptation and resilience-building initiatives such as clean energy, smart agriculture and water conservation.



RAWALPINDI: Lieutenant General Simon Stuart, Chief of Australian Army, called on General Syed Asim Munir, Chief of Army Staff, at General Headquarters.

Ukraine up against 50,000 force in Kursk: Zelenskyy

KYIV (Reuters): Russia is trying to push Ukrainian forces from its western Kursk region with tens of thousands of soldiers, Ukraine's president says, aiming to retake territory it has lost since August while its offensive in eastern Ukraine grinds on. In a post on Telegram on Monday, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Ukraine's soldiers were fighting against nearly "50,000 enemy troops" in Kursk.

Zelenskyy said Ukraine would "considerably strengthen" its positions on the Pokrovsk and Kurakhove fronts in the east, where the most active fighting is occurring. In August, Ukraine launched a surprise incursion into Kursk, seizing settlements in its first operation in Russian territory since Moscow launched its invasion in February 2022.

Russia, however, has continued its slow but steady advance across much of eastern Ukraine, which it is capturing village by village in a bid to seize the entire industrialised Donbas region. Zelenskyy's comments come a day after The New York Times reported that Moscow had assembled a force of 50,000 soldiers, including North Korean soldiers, in the Russian region bordering Ukraine. Western countries, South Korea and Ukraine have all said North Korea has sent soldiers to Russia.

Russia has neither confirmed nor denied the pres-

ence of North Korean soldiers on its territory. On Saturday, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed into law a treaty on Moscow's strategic partnership with Pyongyang, including a mutual defence provision. Russian attacks on Monday killed two in Ukraine's central-east Dnipropetrovsk region and injured at least 19, with more people likely trapped under the rubble, officials said.

Shelling by artillery killed two people in Nikolop and injured five more, regional governor Serhiy Lysak said on the Telegram messenger platform. A medical facility, a cafe and shops were damaged, he added. Separately, at least 14 people were wounded after Moscow's troops launched a missile at a residential building in Kryvyi Rih, central Ukraine, in the morning, according to Lysak.

Rescuers were looking for a woman with three children likely trapped under the rubble, he added. A 10-year-old girl and an 11-year-old boy were among the injured. A Ukrainian military spokesperson also told the Reuters news agency on Monday that Russian infantry groups could launch ground assaults on the neighbouring Zaporizhia region in a matter of days. The spokesperson said the attacks could put more pressure on Kyiv's forces, which are already overstretched.

"[The assaults] could

begin in the near future. We're not even talking about weeks. We're expecting it to happen any day," Vladyslav Voloshyn told Reuters. Also on Monday, Russian attacks damaged a dam near the front line in the eastern Donetsk region of Ukraine, its governor said, warning that nearby villages could be threatened by rising water levels. Moscow's army is rapidly advancing in the Donetsk region and is closing in on the town of Kurakhove, which lies next to the reservoir and had a pre-war population of about 18,000 people.

"The Russians damaged the dam of the reservoir of Kurakhove. This strike potentially threatens residents of settlements on the Vovcha River, both in Donetsk and Dnipro regions," Governor Vadym Filashkin said. On Monday, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov denied Putin had spoken to US President-elect Donald Trump on the Ukraine war despite reports that the leaders had spoken.

"This is the most obvious example of the quality of the information that is being published now, sometimes even in fairly reputable publications," Peskov said, adding that there were "no concrete plans yet" for Putin to contact Trump. During his campaign to win the White House, Trump said he could end the Russia-Ukraine war within 24 hours if elected without elaborating.