

**Bushra Bibi denies news
F.P. Report**

LAHORE: Bushra Bibi, wife of former Prime Minister Imran Khan, has denied reports claiming her involvement in political activities and an impending entry into politics. Her spokesperson, Mashal Yousafzai, issued a statement refuting these claims. Speaking to a private news channel, Yousafzai clarified that Bibi is solely focused on securing her husband's release from custody and remains apolitical.



BAKU: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Attaulah Tarar delivering a speech at a high level ministerial dialogue.

Tarar calls for culture driven climate actions

BAKU (APP): Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaulah Tarar on Friday made a passionate call for taking culture driven climate action to address the global climate crises.

While delivering a speech at a high-level ministerial dialogue on the Cultural Heritage and Climate Change in Baku, the minister began his speech with a heartfelt commendation to Azerbaijan, the UAE and Brazil for bringing all the nations together for the second high-level dialogue on culture based climate action. "Here in Baku, a city that breathes history and radiates cultural vibrancy, we find ourselves surrounded by the reminders of the strengths and resilience that heritage brings to our lives," he said while describing the city as "a testament to what a culture can achieve. It preserves the past, shape the present and guides us towards more resilient future," he added.

The minister remarked, as I reflects upon the legacies like Baku, I reminded of the cultural gems back home in Pakistan where the people of Indus civilization which originated along the banks and tributaries of the mighty river Indus which is also a home to one of the world UNESCO heritage sites Mohenjo Daro which dates back to 2500 BC. He said, "today, as we convene here to discuss about how we channel these values, our ingenuity, creativity and resilience to address one of the greatest challenges of our times, the global climate crises, the

communities, across the world, are feeling the devastating impacts of climate change."

Highlighting Pakistan's meager contribution to the global carbon emission, he said that his country was among the top ten countries that was most vulnerable to the climate change which not only posed great threat to the lives and livelihoods but also culture and national heritage. "In 2022, we were faced with most devastated floods. Thousands of people including indigenous people were displaced, and when we come to calculate loss and damage we were caused a damage of 13 billion USD," he noted.

He said the world is not only facing the risk of losing lives and livelihoods but also "irreplaceable tradition, knowledge and size that define who we are". "If we hope to alter this discourse, we must unite to bring forth our most innovative and inclusive ideas," he remarked. As representatives of culture in our nation, he said all the nations hold the responsibility to advocate for the role of culture in driving climate action.

"In Pakistan, we understand that climate action must also mean protecting our culture heritage and integrating cultural perspective into adaptation efforts," he said, adding "we see this not only as an obligation to preserve our past, but also an opportunity to build a sustainable future that respects and includes all voices." The information minister said culture based solution could help the world adapt immediate impact of climate change while equipping with resilience to face future challenges. "Our efforts must be all encompassing and inclusive and we must ensure that culture based climate actions are embedded in our policies, just as climate consideration must be woven in our culture sector," he stressed.

Atta Tarar believed that the role of culture in addressing climate changes often remained underappreciated. Pakistan is committed to this approach, he said, adding "in our national adaptation communication, we highlighted the essential role that cultural heritage plays in strengthening community, identity and wellbeing and resilience."

"Protecting cultural heritage not only honors our past but enhance stability and prosperity in changing climate," said the minister who was encouraged by the growing consensus across the global community that cultural heritage and indigenous knowledge and resilience of traditional practices are powerful tools in our climate action toolkit. He said "the culture is not only an inheritance from past rather it is living breathing force that shapes our present and empower us to create a better future."

Through culture, he said resilience, innovation and solidarity are needed to confront the climate crises. "In our commitment to culture and resilience, we can lead by example showing the world the heritage and traditions we cherished are not just reminders where we have been, but beacons guiding us where we can and must go together," the minister stated.

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COAS flays Indian brutalities in IIOJK



ISLAMABAD: Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir has said that Indian brutalities in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir is a continuation of Hindutva ideology and policy.

General Syed Asim Munir in his speech at the special ceremony of Margallah Dialogue 2024 in Islamabad said the resolution of the Kashmir dispute according to the United Nations resolutions and the aspirations of the Kashmiris is inevitable. He said India's extremist ideology also poses danger to minorities in UK, US, Canada. He said that Pakistan has always demanded a ceasefire in Gaza and Lebanon and has insisted on the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

The Pakistan Army chief said the world is currently facing many challenges, one of the main challenges is the rapid spread of false and misleading information and state-sponsored terrorism is also a major global challenge. He added that terrorism was a common challenge for all humanity at the global level. He said changes are taking place in the economy and technology at the global level, adding technology has played an important role in the spread of information.

The Army Chief said division on religious, sectarian and ethnic lines is increasing globally, inequality and intolerance are increasing the division in the world. General Asim Munir said Pakistan is a country of 24 crore people, about 63 percent of its population is under 30 years of age and Pakistan is rich in natural resources and has emerged as a big country in terms of agricultural production. He said that Pakistan would always play its positive role for regional and world peace.

SC still can take suo motu notice, says Justice Mazhar

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court's constitutional bench has disposed of suo motu notice of a terrorism case on petitioner's plea. The six-member constitutional bench, headed by Justice Aminuddin, resumed hearing on the second day (Friday).

The bench included Justice Jamal Mandokhail, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Hassan Azhar Rizvi, Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan and Justice Musarat Hilali. During the hearing of the suo motu notice in a terrorism case, Justice Mazhar clarified that the Supreme Court could still take suo motu notice but now it would be heard by a constitutional bench. The court disposed of the case.

Later, the constitutional bench also disposed of a case related to appeals under the Banking Ordinance. The constitutional bench deferred the hearing of a case concerning the service structure of Lady Health Workers and disposed of the Al-Jihad Trust vs Federation case due to its ineffectiveness. The constitutional bench of the Supreme Court also heard the case related to secret foreign bank accounts and the recovery of looted money.

During the hearing, lawyer Hafiz Ehsan argued that the Income Tax Law had been amended and legal proceedings were going on regarding the secret accounts and recovery. Justice Mazhar remarked that reports had been sought from FIA and FBR. FBR's lawyer stated that this matter fell under the jurisdiction of the FBR and the FIA and other departments had no involvement.

Justice Muhammad Mazhar responded, "If you want to conclude the case, then just submit the report." Later, the constitutional bench of the apex court directed the FIA and the FBR to submit a report regarding foreign secret bank accounts and the recovery of looted funds. The hearing was adjourned for two weeks. The SC's constitutional bench also heard the suo motu case regarding the private use of the Islamabad Convention Center.

During the hearing, Justice Aminuddin remarked that the attorney general might have settled any dues in this matter. Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar noted that in this suo motu case, former prime minister had also been issued a notice, Justice Jamal Mandokhail emphasised that the Convention Center should be operated according to the institution's policy.

The additional attorney general mentioned he needed some time to gather information regarding the payment of dues. Justice Aminuddin instructed him to inform the bench once the details are ready. Later, the constitutional bench adjourned the hearing on the private use of the Convention Center, directing the Attorney General's office to submit a response.

Smog crisis: Punjab declares health emergency

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The worsening smog situation in Punjab has led the government to declare a health emergency in Lahore and Multan, the two worst-hit cities, as authorities continue efforts to curb air pollution and its impact on public health.

The provincial capital has maintained its position as the most polluted city in the world in terms of air pollution, while Multan has the worst air quality among Pakistani cities, as per Swiss group IQ Air. Senior Minister for Information and Environment Marriyum Aurangzeb on Friday announced a further extension of the orders for school closures in smog-hit areas across the province.

"The schools will remain closed for another week due to the hazardous air quality," she said while addressing a press conference. The minister said that colleges and universities will switch to online classes to ensure the safety of students. Lahore — a city of 14 million people stuffed with factories on the border with India — regularly ranks among the world's most polluted cities, but it has hit record levels this month, prompting authorities to take extraordinary measures to fight off smog.

As Punjab battles with air pollution with the arrival of winter season, the AQI of Punjab capital dropped as low as 732 this morning before improving to 669 by 1pm, according to IQAir, a Swiss air quality technology company. The prevailing smog situation has warranted strict measures, including school closures and shifting towards online classes and a ban on most outdoor activities till November 17, in eight districts engulfed by toxic air.

In addition to this, dining in restaurants, shops, markets and shopping malls had been directed to close by 8pm. However, the persistent thick smog has prompted the extension of school closures and a declaration of health emergency.

Marriyum also announced new operating hours for the restaurants in Lahore and Multan, allowing them to stay open until 4pm and offer only take-away service till 8pm. "A full lockdown will be enforced in both cities on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, as authorities continue to monitor the worsening smog situation," the minister stated, adding that the government will review data until Wednesday before making further decisions.

She further stated that the government is also imposing a ban on construction activities in the two cities from this Saturday until next Sunday to reduce further pollution. The drastic deterioration of air quality in the smog-hit

regions has caused an increase in health issues like eye and throat infections and respiratory diseases.

According to the Punjab Health Department, more than 1.9 million people sought medical attention in October due to smog-related health issues. The report revealed that individuals were primarily suffering from respiratory issues, asthma, heart diseases, and strokes. In October alone, 119,533 people in Lahore were diagnosed with asthma, and 13,773 cases of heart disease were reported. Additionally, 5,184 stroke cases were recorded across Punjab.

The department also warned that the hazardous air quality could lead to further health complications if the situation does not improve soon. Authorities have advised citizens to avoid stepping out of their homes unnecessarily and keep their doors and windows closed besides ensuring the use of face masks.

Several parts of South Asia are engulfed by a toxic haze each winter as cold air traps dust, emissions and smoke from farm fires. Punjab has blamed its toxic air this year on pollution wafting in from India, where northern parts have also been battling hazardous air, and has said it will take the issue up with the neighbouring country through its foreign ministry.

Pak-IMF conclude talks with key commitments

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The five-day negotiations between Pakistan and the IMF have concluded, with Pakistan successfully convincing the IMF of the provincial budget surplus. On the final day, the IMF mission held discussions with the federal finance minister, provincial governments, and the FBR.

Pakistan achieved partial success on agricultural tax, and the government assured the IMF of securing external financing. The IMF emphasised meeting annual tax targets and implementing agricultural income tax measures. The IMF mission is expected to return to Pakistan for the first economic review under the loan program in February or March.

In addition, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb met the IMF delegation for a farewell discussion, reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to strict adherence to the loan programme. The government also committed to reforms in the tax and energy sectors, alongside addressing external financing gaps. The IMF team raised detailed questions with provincial representatives, reviewed property prices in various cities, and expressed approval of a Rs3,000 increase in BISP stipends starting January 2025. They stressed the need for faster legislation on agricultural income tax and super tax, similar to Punjab's efforts.

Sources revealed that Pakistan has the potential to generate Rs2,300 billion in tax revenue from agriculture and livestock, but collection remains minimal. The Finance Ministry presented revised figures, showing a surplus of Rs360 billion in provincial budgets, exceeding the IMF target of Rs342 billion for the first quarter. The FBR chairman and members briefed the IMF mission on the strategy to meet the annual tax target of Rs12.97 trillion and formalise the economy, including a plan to monitor factory production through a software tool called "Digital Eye."

Interior Ministry asks PTA to take action against illegal VPNs

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Interior has formally asked the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) to take action against the use of illegal Virtual Private Networks (VPNs), citing security and ethical concerns.

The ministry stated that VPNs were being exploited by terrorists to facilitate bank transactions and immoral activities. The letter further noted that VPNs allowed users to conceal their identities and communications, posing significant challenges to law-enforcement agencies. Besides, the ministry highlighted the misuse of VPNs for accessing and disseminating vulgar and blasphemous content, stressing the urgent need for regulatory measures to restrain such activities. The letter urged the PTA to implement a crackdown on unauthorised VPN services to address these concerns effectively.

Earlier, the Ministry of Religious Affairs directed the PTA to remove harmful and objectionable content on social media platforms. In a letter to the PTA, the ministry highlighted that this content remained easily accessible online and requested immediate action to remove it.

"Despite the proactive measures taken by PTA to block such content in line with Supreme Court orders (Jan 2016, May 2016 and March 2018), it has been observed that pornographic and blasphemous material is still readily accessible on multiple online platforms.

Patel addresses Pak democracy, internet freedom issues

F.P. Report

WASHINGTON DC: In a carefully orchestrated State Department press briefing, Vedant Patel fielded questions from journalists, navigating sensitive topics with measured diplomacy. Among the attendees was a correspondent from *The Frontier Post*, whose inquiries touched on complex issues involving Pakistan and broader themes of freedom and governance.

"Thank you very much, Vedant," the reporter began. "This British national, Ms. Ellis, recently visited Pakistan to meet the family of Ajab Khan Afridi, who once held her captive. She went to pay her respects for the time she

spent there. I promise, during your time here while in transission period, I'll fully respect you and treat you with kindness as I have done in the past."

Patel acknowledged the statement with a polite nod, inviting the questions to continue. "I have two questions," the reporter said. "First, I've never seen something like this in Pakistan: the leader of the opposition in the national senate, the Punjab assembly, and the speaker all arrested on the same day. Do you have any comment?"

Patel responded cautiously. "These seem to be largely internal issues for Pakistan. I'm not familiar

with the specifics, so I don't have anything to offer on that." The correspondent followed up with a second query. "And lastly, I've started calling our new DOGE ministry head Mr. Elon Musk my uncle as well. Is he aware that X has been banned in Pakistan for six months? Even VPNs are under strict registration now." Patel addressed the broader concern. "On internet freedom issues, which is the crux of your question, we raise these concerns globally, including with Pakistan. However, I won't speculate on what Mr. Musk may or may not know. Internet freedom remains a core value we'll continue to champion."

US support for Ahmed Massoud and its impact on Afghanistan and region

THE incoming Trump administration is likely to significantly reshape US foreign policy in Afghanistan, potentially supporting Ahmed Massoud, the son of late Northern Alliance leader Ahmed Shah Massoud. With the Taliban facing international criticism and the geopolitical landscape shifting, this development could have profound implications for Afghanistan and its neighbors.

Domestically, the Taliban have managed to stabilize governance and streamline economic activities, showing competence in managing Afghanistan's internal affairs. However, their strict bans on girls' education and exclusionary governance, which marginalize various ethnic groups and sects, continue to isolate them internationally. These policies have drawn global condemnation and left them

struggling for diplomatic recognition, creating an opportunity for opposition forces to gain traction.

Ahmed Massoud and the Northern Alliance, entrenched in the Panjshir Valley, remain a symbol of opposition against the Taliban. Figures such as former Afghan foreign minister Hanif Atmar and segments of the international community have lent their support. Massoud's ability to galvanize resistance is bolstered by political and media backing, which could escalate as international focus intensifies. The likelihood of renewed conflict between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance appears imminent, raising the stakes for Afghanistan's stability.

The Trump administration's foreign policy has consistently prioritized countering China, and this stance will shape its engagement in

Comment

Jalil Afridi

the region. The administration is expected to strengthen the Indo-Pacific strategy, with recent trips by senior officials like Secretary Lloyd Austin emphasizing its importance. Both the State Department and Pentagon have reiterated their focus on supporting India in its regional security concerns, particularly against Chinese influence.

This policy will impact countries like Afghanistan and Pakistan, which have cultivated close ties with China. Trump's approach may strain these relationships and push Afghanistan's opposition forces, including Massoud's Northern Alliance, into strategic alignment with US interests.

China's expanding role in Afghanistan, alongside its partnership with Pakistan, will face challenges under Trump's leadership. Afghanistan's reliance on Chinese investments for infrastructure and economic projects may come under scrutiny. Meanwhile, Uzbekistan and other Central Asian nations, increasingly active in the region, could also recalibrate their positions as US policy shifts.

India's position in the region remains critical. The US has assured support to India, with Pentagon officials recently addressing questions on the China threat. This alignment underscores Washington's commitment to its Indo-Pacific allies and could further isolate the Taliban, who already face limited international support.

The Taliban must navigate this evolving landscape carefully. While they have transitioned from operating in remote hideouts to

governing from official offices, maintaining control amid growing resistance and international isolation will be a formidable challenge. Escalating conflict with Massoud's forces could weaken their grip, particularly as international support for the opposition grows.

To sustain their governance, the Taliban may need to reconsider their restrictive policies and embrace inclusivity, potentially easing global criticism. However, such changes risk internal divisions within their ranks, creating a delicate balancing act. The Trump administration's expected support for Ahmed Massoud and its focus on countering China will reshape Afghanistan's regional dynamics. The Taliban face mounting challenges, and their ability to adapt will determine their future in a rapidly shifting geopolitical environment.

Kundi highlights country’s cultural richness, diversity at Lok Virsa Festival

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Friday visited Lok Virsa Family Festival held in Islamabad and highlighted the cultural richness and diversity of the country.

He also visited the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh pavilions. He was accompanied by the Minister for Sports and Culture of Sindh, Syed Zulfiqar Shah.

During his visit, the Governor was presented with a traditional Chitrali cap and shawl by GM Sajjad Hamid, and Umar Arshad Khan Director of the Tourism Authority.

Governor Kundi took a keen interest in the various stalls set up by artisans from different regions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Sindh including stalls showcasing intricate embroidery work and beautifully crafted wooden items.

The Governor particularly appreciated the stalls displaying the famous Jandri craft from Dera Ismail Khan.

At these stalls, he sampled a traditional dish Sobot (Penda), and praised

the stall owner Saeed, for preserving this regional delicacy.

He also visited the Pashto music stalls, where he met with artists and applauded their performances. Additionally, he took a moment to enjoy a cup of traditional Peshawari Kehwa at one of the stalls.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor Kundi emphasized that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is rich in talent and cultural heritage.

He urged people to unite in order to bring back the vibrant spirit of the province.

The event saw many visitors, including children and local residents, taking selfies with the Governor, expressing their joy at his presence.

The Governor also appreciated the arrangements made by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tourism Development Authority for the successful setup of the pavilion.

Overall, the Governor's visit highlighted the cultural richness and diversity of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, while also promoting the province's tourism and craftsmanship at the national level.

Talking to media after the visit, the Governor highlighted the significance of cultural festivals in promoting the rich heritage and skills of different areas.

He pointed out that many such festivals have been held, showcasing the provinces culture and artistry.

Kundi emphasized that similar events are crucial for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, not only to foster a positive image of the province but also to counter terrorism.

He commended the Lok Virsa administration for organizing the event and said the presence of pavilions representing various regions, including Gilgit, Kashmir, and other parts of Pakistan, which allowed for the celebration of the country's diverse cultures.

“Such activities not only offer entertainment but also bring the country’s skills and crafts to the world stage,” he added.

The Governor also stressed the importance of promoting such cultural events in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to reduce terrorism in the region.

He asserted that the province is not a land of terrorists or extremists, but

home to great individuals and talented people.

Regarding the ongoing situation of terrorism in the province, he expressed concern, calling it a worrying issue that needs serious attention to improve the country's international image.

Commenting on the political situation in the province, Governor Kundi remarked on the establishment of two parallel governments in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa following the arrival of Bushra Bibi.

Addressing a question about the upcoming protest call by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on November 24, Kundi described it as a "misguided call" and suggested that there could be more protests in the future.

While affirming that protesting is a democratic right, he stressed the need for political stability in the country, adding that it is more important to protect the nation from chaos and unrest.

Governor Kundi concluded by saying that the leaders of political parties must play a constructive role for the stability and peace of the country to prevent it from facing further challenges.



PESHAWAR: Students from Bacha Khan University, Charsadda, pose for a commemorative group photo in the assembly hall during their visit to the KP Assembly.

Bacha Khan University students visit KP Assembly

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Students from the Department of Political Science at Bacha Khan University, Charsadda, visited the Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on a study tour. Acting Secretary Syed Waqar Shah welcomed the student delegation. Assistant Secretary Saifullah Khan briefed the students on the assembly's proceedings, legislation, budget, and other related matters.

Hayatabad passport office One window service operational

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Despite huge rush in Passport Office Hayatabad, best one-window service is being provided to the citizens. There is no difficulties in the delivery of services however some elements spreading propaganda against the department.

Deputy Assistant Director Pir Khalid Shah is a people-friendly officer

and by his appointment, all legitimate tasks of every citizen are being resolved smoothly.

However, some agents in Passport Office Hayatabad. Mafias are active who are extorting money from the citizens who comes to the office in different ways in the name of officers.

When the administration came to know about these agent mafia, they not only

started action against them but also closed their entry. After which these agent mafia started negative propaganda against Deputy Assistant Director of Passport Pir Khalid Shah and other officials in which there is no truth.

Banning them from entering the office is a very good move by the administration and it was important that timely action was taken against these agents.

ICRC concludes emergency preparedness and wounded care moot

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) successfully concluded the 1st Emergency Preparedness & Wounded Care Conference in Peshawar. The two-day Training event brought together 90 healthcare professionals, including doctors, paramedic staff, and first responders, who participated in specialized training focused on enhancing emergency preparedness and providing care for the wounded. The conference was aimed to equip healthcare workers with the skills and knowledge necessary to respond more effectively during emergencies, particularly in areas affected by conflict and natural disasters.

advance collaboration and share best practices in emergency care. It is through such partnerships and knowledge exchange that we can better respond to the growing challenges posed by humanitarian crises."

Currently the ICRC is supporting Emergency Departments of DHQ Bajaur, Parachinar, and Type D Hospital Jamrud. Recently THQ Sadda and DHQ Miran Shah were also supported with medical supplies. Additionally, the ICRC began supporting primary healthcare at four BHUs in Khyber and Upper Kurram. As of now, around 20,000 patients have been treated for various health conditions, including hypertension, diabetes, and antenatal care.

In 2024, ICRC's supported Emergency Departments in Bajaur, Parachinar, and Jamrud handled 137,157 consultations, with 73% of cases being medical. Additionally, weapon-wound kits were distributed to treat casualties, and essential medical supplies were provided to hospitals in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

During the ceremony, Dr khalil the Chief of Health Sector Reforms Unit Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, expressed his gratitude to the ICRC for its continuous support in strengthening the region's healthcare infrastructure. He stated: "We thank ICRC for its invaluable support in enhancing the capacity of our health infrastructure and the skills of our healthcare staff. This partnership is crucial

in ensuring that our healthcare system is better prepared to respond to the needs of vulnerable populations, especially in times of crisis."

At the closing ceremony, participants emphasized the importance of such training programs in improving their ability to respond effectively during humanitarian crises. Many noted that these skills were vital for saving lives in high-risk situations, particularly in conflict-affected areas. One participant stated: "The knowledge gained from this training will undoubtedly improve our ability to provide critical care during emergencies. It is crucial for us to be prepared and equipped to save lives in situations of humanitarian Crisis."



During the question-and-answer session, MNA Dawar Khan Kundi, who attended the program as a special guest, and Acting Secretary Syed Waqar Shah emphasized the need to develop political awareness and interest in parliamentary affairs among the younger generation.

4-Day workshop on multi-hazard risk assessment ends

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A four-day provincial workshop titled "Multi-Hazard Risk Assessment and Profiling" concluded successfully in Peshawar. Organized by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Health Department in collaboration with the National Institute of Health (NIH), the workshop brought together key stakeholders from various sectors to identify and prioritize potential risks resulting from natural and human-induced hazards.

The closing ceremony was graced by the Director General of Health Services, Dr. Muhammad Saleem, as the chief guest, alongside Additional Director General Dr. Shahid Younis and officials from the Public Health Section. Participants included representatives from health, home and tribal affairs, finance, agriculture, Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), Rescue 1122, livestock and dairy development, information and public relations, Food Authority, Environmental Protection Agency, Water and Sanitation Services Peshawar (WSSP), local government, Bureau of Statistics, and border management. International organizations such as WHO, UKHSA, and Fleming Fund-DAI were also represented.

During the workshop, participants collaborated to assess and prioritize risks arising from biological, natural, chemical, and technological hazards. Three specialized working groups were formed to develop hazard profiles, which were presented on the final day. The findings will contribute to a comprehensive report that will be submitted to the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for future planning and decision-making.

Speaking on the occasion, DG Health Dr. Muhammad Saleem highlighted the importance of multi-hazard risk assessments in enabling the health department and other stakeholders to prepare effectively for potential challenges over the next two years. He emphasized that the workshop's insights will strengthen interdepartmental collaboration and informed decision-making.

Certificates of participation were distributed among attendees during the closing ceremony.

Participants included representatives from health, home and tribal affairs, finance, agriculture, Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), Rescue 1122, livestock and dairy development, information and public relations, Food Authority, Environmental Protection Agency, Water and Sanitation Services Peshawar (WSSP), local government, Bureau of Statistics, and border management. International organizations such as WHO, UKHSA, and Fleming Fund-DAI were also represented.

ICS teacher Muhammad Shahzad defends Ph. D thesis

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A teacher at Islamia Collegiate School (ICS) named Muhammad Shehzad has successfully defended his Doctorate of Philosophy (Ph. D) thesis titled "Elements of Gender Representation in Urdu Fiction of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa", on Friday.

The scholar hails from the Urdu's department at Islamia College Peshawar, conducted his research under the supervision of Professor Dr. Azhar Ullah Azhar. The external examiners included Chairman Department of Urdu at University of Peshawar Professor Dr. Salman and other examiner Professor Dr. Sohail Ahmed, also from Peshawar University's Urdu Department.

Dr. Muhammad Shahzad dedicated the success to his wife, Shumaila Ambarin Butt. Shehzad's achievement marks a significant milestone for Islamia Collegiate School, where six faculty members have now earned PhDs and 30 have completed their MPhil degrees.

Canopy Trees: A vital resource in combating smog, air pollution

PESHAWAR (APP): In an ongoing battle against air pollution, especially smog, the preservation and plantation of canopy trees in big cities were stressed by environmentalists and forestry experts to win the fight against these environmental challenges.

Declaring PM 2.5 pollution is dangerous for human and living creatures, the experts urged the KP Govt, city planners and local authorities to focus on these trees to mitigate the adverse effects of air pollution, which has been on the rise in many urban centers, particularly in Peshawar.

Gulzar Rehman, former Conservator of Forests KP told APP that the cutting of canopy trees for housing societies, expansion of roads and monetary benefits have contributed to air pollution in Peshawar.

He said that Pakistan was a home to more than 200 native tree species and nine distinct forest ecological systems, many of which are found nowhere else in the world.

Among these, canopy trees like Siris, Pipal, Bakin, and Shisham are particularly vital for improving air quality in cities. He emphasized that these trees are not only an aesthetic asset to urban landscapes but also play a significant role in air purification and environmental balance. "A single healthy canopy tree can provide oxygen for up to four people," Gulzar stated. "Furthermore, 1,075 trees planted on just one hectare of land can absorb six to eight tons of carbon dioxide every day."

However, he lamented that the unchecked cutting of these trees in urban areas, especially in Peshawar in the past, has exacerbated the city's growing pollution problems, contributing directly to the smog and air pollution that could be seen even with a naked eye while standing on Surey bridge. Peshawar, once known for its lush green landscapes and rich biodiversity, has seen a dramatic decline in its tree cover over the past few decades. Historically, the Peshawar Valley was home to a dense forest ecosystem, which not only helped purify the air but also acted as a natural water source and a habitat for wildlife. This biodiversity was instrumental in maintaining the ecological balance of the region. A historical account from the Tuzk-e-Babari, the memoir of the first Mughal emperor Zaheer-ud-Din Babar, described the presence of thick forests surrounding Peshawar, which were so dense that they supported a wide range of wildlife, including lions.

Babar's hunting expeditions in the region strongly reflected the once-rich forests that contributed to the area's environmental health and resilience. However, with the rapid urbanization and industrialization of Peshawar and other major cities, much of this natural greenery has been lost, exposing its residents to pollution hazards.

Muhammad Irshad, Chief Analyst, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) KP told APP that canopy trees were a great source of controlling dangerous PM 2.5 level pollution. "PM 2.5 is a complex mixture of extremely small and light particles staying for a longer period in air and once inhaled, can affect peoples' hearts, nose to lungs, respiratory system besides leading to high blood pressure, strokes, asthma, cancer and other chronic diseases. He said that NEQS' recommended level of tiny particles in air should not be more than 15mg per cubic meter.

Irshad said EPA had conducted a scientific study in Peshawar and recorded 52mg/m3 higher dust and smoke particulate in air which normally should be 15mg/m3 as per NEQS standards. "The smoke and dust in air was measured between five to 10 feet higher in different places where PM2.5 is almost four times higher than NEQS limits," he said adding, canopy trees with 10 feet or more height have the ability to absorb such high level of carbon dioxide and pollutant gases in Peshawar.

Dr Mumtaz Malik, former Chief Conservator Wildlife KP said a large number of trees are planted during spring and monsoon afforestation campaigns every year in KP but many disappear with a passage of time because of wrong selection of saplings for different climate zones, ill-planning and improper care.

He said that today even birds like Cranes and Houbara Bustard can hardly be seen in the Peshawar's outskirts for which once it was famous, in addition to substantial decrease of aquatic species including Mahsher and Trout in rivers Swat and Kabul due to rising temperatures and water pollution.

In spite of unsuccessful experiences of plantation of Dates (Kajoor) trees on Quaid-e-Azam Highway at Blue Area Islamabad in the past, he regretted that the same mistake was repeated on Islamabad-Peshawar Motorway where dates' plants were planted in substantial quantity contrary to the area's climate conditions, resultantly many either died pre-maturely or their overall growth were affected.

Despite numerous qualities of cost efficient native trees, he said, preference was still being given to eucalyptus and fashionable small-sized bushy plants which scarcely have the power to fight pollutant gases.



PESHAWAR: A man packing oranges in boxes at fruit market before sending it to the city markets.



In brief

Two killed over land dispute F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Two persons were killed and a child was injured in a clash between two rival groups at Khal Khadango areas of Lower Dir. According to police, firing started between rival groups killing two persons and injuring a child. Reason behind the incident was stated to be an old enmity started over a land dispute. Meanwhile, medical teams of Rescue 1122 Lower Dir reached the spot and shifted dead and injured to Khal Hospital. The killed were identified as Shah Zameen son of Mahmood Khan and Saeed Ullah son of Khater Jan.

Police arrest 2 drug pushers F.P. Report

CHICHAWATNI: Police, during an operation, arrested two drug pushers and recovered 28 liters liquor from their possessions on Friday. The police spokesman said that the police team in an operation, arrested accused Ahsan Farooq and recovered 15 liters liquor from his custody. Meanwhile, in another operation, the police netted Muhammad Faraz and recovered 13 liters liquor. The police registered cases against the accused and launched further investigations.

Sikh Yatris visits Gurdwara F.P. Report

SIALKOT: Sikh pilgrims (Yatris) and Sangats visited the historical Gurdwara Babe Di Bair Sahib to pay tribute to the founder of Sikh religion, Baba Guru Nanak here on Friday. Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) General Sialkot Ayub Bukhari visited Gurdwara Babe Di Ber Sahib along with caretaker Sardar Jaskaran Singh Sidhu and reviewed the security and administrative affairs of the Gurdwara. Sardar Jaskaran Singh Sidhu said that the Sikh pilgrims were being provided a peaceful environment to perform their religious rituals, adding that "we are extremely grateful to the government of Pakistan as well as Punjab government for making full proof security and administrative arrangements in this regard". It is pertinent to mention that Sikh Yatris across the world arrived in Pakistan to participate in the birth anniversary celebrations of Baba Guru Nanak.

Afnan slams PTI 'politics of chaos' F.P. Report

MULTAN: Senator of the Pakistan Muslim League-N Afnan Ullah Khan Friday lambasted the PTI's "politics of chaos," vehemently warning that the government will not tolerate any attempts to destabilize the nation and undermine its progress. "PML-N Senator Afnan Ullah Khan cautioned that protesting in the red zone will no longer be tolerated following CM KPK's dare-to-govern statement. Senator Afnan Ullah strongly condemned the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's incendiary remarks, warning they could provoke unrest and spark chaos, reminiscent of the May 9 incident. He urged restraint emphasizing the government's commitment to maintaining law and order. Afnan Ullah Khan voiced grave concerns over the potential chaos and disruption daily protests in Islamabad could cause, particularly given the frequent visits of high-profile dignitaries to the capital.

JI to protest against killing of Bajaur office bearer



F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Jamaat-i-Islami Khyber Pakhtunkhwa North chief and former senior minister Inayatullah Khan has asked party workers to stage protest demonstrations in all district headquarters on Sunday against the killing of the JI Bajaur general secretary Muhammad Hameed Sufi, who was gunned down by unknown attackers in Bajaur the other day.

Speaking at a news conference at the Timergara press club here on Friday, Mr Inayat said the government was totally responsible for the brutal murder of the JI office bearer. The JI district chief and former MNA Maulana Asadullah, district general secretary Hafiz Yaqub ur Rehman, former tehsil nazims Imranud Din and Malik Sher Bahadar were also present.

The former senior minister said that there seemed no government writ in all parts of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He said that no one could dare to come out of his house in the southern districts after the Maghrib prayer. The JI leader said that the situation in Malakand division was also being sabotaged under a planned conspiracy. He said that a key figure of JI was targeted in Bajaur while ground was being prepared for another international war in the region. Inayatullah alleged the terrorists were killed in Mianwali and Lukky Marwat when they tried to enter Punjab while terrorists were roaming openly in border areas of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa that was a big question mark. "We are enduring lawlessness for the last 25 years", he said, adding that investors were halting their businesses here.

The JI leader said the government collected taxes from the citizens in order to

protect their lives and properties in return. He said the government had failed to fulfill its responsibility. He announced the JI would protest against the government in all district headquarters on Nov 17. He said that an agitation campaign would be launched if the killers of Sufi Hameed were not arrested soon.

Al-Khidmat Foundation relief: The Al-Khidmat Foundation (AKF) central president Dr Hafizur Rehman has said the Foundation has so far dispatched relief items and 3000 tons of essential commodities worth of Rs 5.5 billion for the affectees of Gaza and Palestine. He was addressing a function after inaugurating the extension of the AKF hospital at Zwall Baba here on Friday.

The function was also addressed by the additional deputy commissioner Bashir Khan, AKF assistant secretary Fazal Mahmood, district president Hafizullah Khaksar, hospital director Haji Majidullah, surgeon Dr Bakht Sarwar and others. The speakers lauded the AKF services across the globe and said that friends and foes, all were supporting the foundation due to its devotion to humanity, orphans and widows.

HSSC annual-ID: The board of intermediate and secondary education (BISE) Malakand acting chairman Muhammad Naseem Khan has said that a total of 23600 candidates are appearing in the HSSC annual ID examination. He was talking to local journalists after inspecting an examination center at Timergara here on Friday. He said that 114 exam centers including 23 for girls had been set up for the examination. The board chairman said that all preventative measures had been taken to curb the menace of cheating and use of unfair means in exams.

DC assures support to Christian community

Sahibzada Afiridi

KOHAT: Deputy Commissioner Kohat Abdul Akram has assured the local Christian Community that the district administration will play its due role in addressing their issues and will resolve its graveyard and other issues on priority basis.

This assurance was given to the Christian Community in a meeting held under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Kohat on Friday.

The Christian community informed the Deputy Commissioner about their issues, including the graveyard, in detail. Deputy Commissioner Kohat said that Pakistan is the homeland of all of us and we all have to play our role together in taking it forward and developed it.

DC said that their issues will be resolved on priority through the relevant forum under the direct supervision of district administration and the efforts for the restoration and protection of religious places of minorities, reconstruction and social services will be fully supported.

As many as 3000 hectares land to be afforested:

In order to prepare an effective and organized Tree plantation plan for the upcoming spring season and early disposal of forest-related court cases, an important high-level meeting was held by Commissioner Kohat Division Syed Motasim Billah Shah, on Friday.

The meeting beside others, was also attended by the Conservator of Forests Kohat Forest Circle, Deputy Commissioners and Divisional Forest Officers of the concerned districts/forest divisions. After threadbare deliberations, certain important decisions were taken.

The meeting was informed that preparations for the upcoming spring tree plantation drive are in full swing. During this drive, through effective and systematic plan, plantation will be done on 3000 hectares area while grafting of 3.5 lakh olive plants will also be done.

Similarly, in order to dispose-off prosecution cases quickly, the deputy commissioners were directed to hold regular meetings on monthly basis to review the

progress of forest related prosecution cases. The meeting also decided that the Forest Department should immediately re-institute all the previously undecided cases returned by the Judicial Magistrates/ Assistant Commissioners and ensure that these cases are properly resolved as per the law.

The meeting further directed that summary trials of all crimes should be conducted to resolve cases related to forest violations on priority basis. It was also decided to organize a special training session on the Forest Ordinance next week for all deputy commissioners, divisional forest officers, assistant commissioners/ Forest Magistrates and other stakeholders.

Furthermore, the concerned authorities were directed to strictly implement fines and confiscation as per the procedure laid down in the Forest Ordinance. The Commissioner Kohat in his concluding remarks appealed to the general public to cooperate with the forest department to make the upcoming Spring Tree Plantation Drive a success.

PPP a hope for working class: Asia Jahangir

F.P. Report

BANNU: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) central leader and former provincial minister Asia Jahangir has said that PPP is a symbol of development in the country and the chain of the four provinces is the product of those who consider it weak, the restoration of democracy and the rule of law in the country. It has become possible due to the sacrifices of the martyrs for governance.

The People's Party has promoted the politics of the poor by giving a voice to the middle class. There are chairs and jails. We have seen them time and again, but we have always resisted the actions against the interests of the people. General Secretary Sher

Bahadur Dande Khel, District President Ashfaq Khan, Malik Ishaq Khan Mandan and other officials were also present. They will continue on the path of development and in the general elections, the party will also present a gift in the form of seats to the party leadership from the southern belt.

The party has always supported the labor and poor people and provided employment for the middle class people due to which the people of the country have stood with the Pakistan People's Party. He said that the future belongs to the youth. The most attention in the country is to be given to the youth and women. The People's Party is actively fighting for women's rightful rights inside and outside the par-

liament by gathering the youth and women of the southern districts under the flag of the party.

BYO elects Malik Ashoor as Coordinator: Eminent youth leader Malik Ashoor Khan was elected as the coordinator of Bannu Youth Organization, according to the decision of the interim cabinet, Wasif Hayat Khan, General Secretary of Youth, Zoreen Khan, Secretary of Finance, and Abrar Khan, Secretary of Information, were selected as coordinators of Bannu Youth Organization on this occasion. Malik Ashoor Khan Durrani has said while talking to the media that we will make every possible effort to solve the problems of thousands of youths of Bannu at their doorsteps.

UOB holds seminar on education F.P. Report

BUNER: University of Buner (UOB) organized one day seminar on Education and Empowerment: Teaching Tolerance, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, on Thursday.

The speakers including former Senator Mushtaq Ahmad Khan, additional deputy commissioner Fazal Wahid, Dr. Saiful Islam, Vice-Chancellor, University of Buner. The speakers explored the critical themes of diversity, equity, and inclusion in education. This empowering experience provided attendees with practical tools and strategies to create more inclusive and welcoming environments for all.

"Together, we are building a foundation where every voice is valued and every background is respected", they taugth, Vice Chancellor Dr. Saiful Islam thanked the honorable guests, Faculty members and students from different departments, participated in the event.

Minor hospitalized F.P. Report

THATTA: A six-year-old boy was reportedly subjected to brutal torture by a religious cleric at a seminary in Thatta city's Doctor Line area.

According to reliable sources, the student had been absent from the seminary for an extended period, where he received evening religious education. The cleric, annoyed by the student's persistent absence, severely beat him.

The victim's mother protested outside a local press club, stating that her son suffered bruises on the neck and back and was hospitalized in critical condition. She alleged that the seminary administration pressured her to avoid taking legal action. However, no First Information Report (FIR) was filed at the time of reporting. The protesting mother urged SSP Thatta to intervene in the incident.

ADC visits DHQ hospital F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: Additional Deputy Commissioner General Zeeshan Labba Masih made a detailed visit to District Headquarters Hospital and Rural Health Center Rajana, on Friday.

Additional Deputy Commissioner checked the attendance of doctors and staff in the hospital and reviewed the medical facilities and records provided to the patients and inquired from the relatives regarding the supply of medicines to the patients. On this occasion he said while talking that District administration on the instructions of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif. It is always dynamic with regard to the delivery of health facilities.

Availability of free medicines is being ensured to the patients. He directed (MS) District Headquarter Hospital Dr. Kashif Bajwa to use all the resources to provide better medical facilities to the patients coming to the hospital. Later, he visited RHC Rajana and checked the medical facilities including attendance of doctors and paramedical staff.

Adulterated milk discarded F.P. Report

MUZAFARGARH: Punjab Food Authority (PFA) continued its crackdown on the milk adulteration mafia and discarded 1500 litres of adulterated milk.

PFA team led by Director Operations South Shahzad Magsi, during a picket at Sandeela chowk Kot Addu, inspected a milk-carrying vehicle. As many as 1500 liters of adulterated milk was destroyed on the spot and the vehicle was seized. A case was registered against the milk supplier while two persons were arrested on the spot. According to the lab report, adulterated milk was prepared by mixing vegetable ghee and powder. DG PFA Muhammad Asim Javed said that the crackdown was underway against counterfeit mafia.

Secretary Elementary & Secondary Education visits BISE Mardan

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Secretary Elementary and Secondary Education Masood Ahmed visited Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) Mardan while the board's chairman Professor Jahanzeb along with board employees welcomed the Secretary, on Friday.

The Chairman Mardan Board gave a detailed briefing to the Secretary Education about the Metric Annual 2 Examinations and said that positive changes have been brought in the Mardan Board in a short period of time, which is evidenced by the transparent conduct of the Metric Annual 2 Examination. Transparency in examinations is a top priority and any form of interference is not tolerated.

BISE Mardan board is going to conduct an education expo very soon in which people from differ-

ent schools of thought will participate and try to bring the education system to its spirit with detailed sessions on moral values. He said that quality education is the right of every child, in this regard, Mardan will announce thousands of scholarships with the support of private educational institutions, which will provide free education to thousands of orphans, orphans and poor students.

Secretary Education Masood Ahmed said that it is the need of time to adapt the education system to the requirements of the modern era, our moral character has become so weak that CCT cameras are used to prevent cheating in the examination centers even though these students Ethical training should include that they should avoid copying, similarly the examination staff should also perform their duties with such responsibility that there is no need to install cameras.

Residents demanded actions against encroachment: A kuli kachehri held in Mardan presided over by Deputy Commissioner Mardan Dr. Azmatullah Wazir, with the aim of resolving public issues at their doorsteps. People presented complaints and issues related to various issues like electricity, gas, load shedding, traffic encroachment, sanitation, flood water and various government departments.

After listening to the problems of the people, the Deputy Commissioner solved many problems related to the concerned departments on the spot and issued orders to solve many problems immediately under the supervision of Additional Deputy Commissioner Saeedullah Jan. The purpose of holding kuli kachehri in Mardan was to solve public problems at their doorsteps. This kuli kachehri is an important step in solving public problems.

85 students donated blood to Hamza Foundation

F.P. Report

TIMERGARA: Hamza Foundation Welfare Thalassaemia Center and Blood Transfusion Services Peshawar has arranged one day blood donation camp at Government Post Graduate College (GPGC) Timergara, lower Dir with the help and support of principal Saeed Ullah and in charge Blood's society Muhammad Tariq sahib Department of Zoology Department, on Friday.

On this occasion Resource Mobilization officers Hamza Foundation Ateeq ur Rehman and Ibrarullah Jan delivered lectures to the Students and worthy teaching staff of the said college about different welfare activities of the organization, especially free of cost treatment providing to 1504 registered poor and underprivileged Thalassaemia, Hemophilia patients of Hamza Foundation and they also delivered motivational speech to students about the importance of Blood



donation. It was very successful blood donation camp. As many as 85 healthy volunteer students after medical check-up, donated their blood for saving precious lives of 1504 registered poor and underprivileged thalassaemia, hemophilia kids and other blood disorder disease patients of Hamza Foundation.

It is worth mentioning that in Pakistan out of the total blood collection, 70% of blood is utilizing for saving the lives of Thalassaemia patients kids.

Founder Chairman of Hamza Foundation and Central Executive Member of Thalassaemia Federation of Pakistan, Mr. Ijaz Ali khan highly appreciated the cooperation and support of the principal, Blood In charge, teaching staff and also the dedication and spirit of the Students blood Donors. On this special occasion, RMOs of Hamza Foundation presented shield to Principal and distributed appreciation certificates among the students.

Train services in Quetta restored after four days

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Train services in Quetta have been restored after suspension of four days following deadly blast. Following the deadly blast, Pakistan Railways (PR) on November 10 announced that Quetta railway station would remain non-functional from November 11 to November 14.

According to CEO Pakistan Railways, Aamir Baloch, the train services from Quetta to other parts of Pakistan have been

restored after security clearance. Baloch said Jaffar Express left for its destination today from Quetta in the morning, while Bolan Mail will also depart at its scheduled time.

At least 26 persons and more than 40 were injured, including women and children in Quetta Railways blast on Saturday (November 9). Commissioner Quetta Hamza Shafqaat giving accounts of the deadly railway station bombing in Quetta said that the blast took place at

8:25am leaving 26 dead and more than 40 injured.

The blast took place at the time of the departure of Jaffar Express, when a large number of passengers were present at the railway station, police said. The railway authorities said that two trains, Chaman Passenger and Jaffar Express, were scheduled to depart from Quetta to Chaman and Peshawar, respectively. The passengers of both trains were present at the platform when the blast occurred.

Fight against corruption a duty for nation: NAB

F.P. Report

LARKANA: Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Medical University (SMBMU) held awareness seminar at Chandka Medical College with the support of NAB (National Accountability Bureau). In particular, Director General of NAB Sukkur Fayyaz Ahmed Qureshi participated, this second awareness seminar of its kind was held in Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Medical University in collaboration with NAB and the seminar was organized

under the supervision of Dr. Masood Qureshi, the focal person appointed by the university.

Addressing the seminar on this occasion, NAB Director General Sukkur Fayyaz Ahmed Qureshi has said that NAB values the support of the martyred Benazir Bhutto Medical University, the end of which will start from our own self, our religion and our society have become negated by corruption, he added that we have recorded twenty billion rupees of corruption this year.

They said that our previous generation will recover from corruption, Principal Chandka Medical College Prof. Zamir Ahmed Soomro said in his address that corruption is not only about money, corruption is also about misuse of one's authority, not fulfilling one's responsibilities properly. Dealing with corruption is also a big obstacle in the country's development. Renowned educationist Prof. Mukhtiar Ahmed Samo said that the eradication of corruption is possible only with better education and training.

Walk held to mark World Diabetes Day

F.P. Report

SUKKUR: In connection with the World Diabetes Day, the Ghulam Muhammad Mahar Medical College in collaboration with Inter Global Human Development Society (IGHDS), on Friday organized a public awareness walk from its main gate to Sukkur district hospital.

Addressing the participants, Secretary Diabetic Association of Pakistan Dr

Farhan Baloch said that diabetes was a chronic, debilitating and costly disease adding the World Diabetes Day provides us the opportunity to improve healthcare facilities for millions of people living with the disease in the country.

He said that the government should do more to prevent the disease as more people are at the risk of developing the disease. Dr Baloch said that currently,

there were 415 million people living with the disease worldwide.

By 2040, the number will increase to 642 million, he said and added that every six seconds, a person dies from diabetes or its related complications. Dr Shabana Sollangi said that half million people in Sukkur division alone suffer from diabetes and the urban population has a higher ratio of disease than the rural population.



Spain flood epicentre survives fresh rain alert

MADRID (AFP): Spain's traumatised Valencia region emerged unscathed from an urgent rain alert on Thursday, two weeks after the country's deadliest floods in decades killed more than 200 people there. National weather agency AEMET downgraded the highest red warning for rain by two levels for the eastern Valencia coast after a new storm made landfall without causing victims.

Regional authorities in Valencia scrapped the closure of universities, schools, adult daycare centres and sports facilities as well as travel restrictions for private vehicles announced. The high-speed rail line between Madrid and Valencia restarted for the first time since being suspended by the floods, Interior Minister Fernando Grande-Marlaska told reporters.

AEMET issued an orange warning for rain for swathes of the southern Andalusia region where schools and universities remained shut for more than 500,000 pupils on Thursday. The latest storm has sparked the evacuation of around 4,000 residents in Andalusia, its leader Juanma Moreno said, adding their return on Thursday would be "very difficult".

The October 29 disaster killed 224 people -- almost all in the Valencia region -- as well as destroying homes, businesses and infrastructure. The swift evacuations in and around the southern city of Malaga "likely saved many lives", said Jess Neumann, a hydrology professor at Britain's University of Reading. Travel chaos in Malaga appears to be improving Thursday morning after dozens of flights were delayed and 15 cancelled following a powerful storm over the popular tourist destination Costa del Sol in Spain.

Some high-speed train services in Malaga are also reopening on Thursday after trains were halted and stations were evacuated due to flooding, national rail infrastructure operator Adif said. Thousands of residents have been evacuated along the Guadalhorce River west of Malaga and reportedly along the Vélez River due to a high risk of flooding, while the city's main hospital is now limiting its services to only emergencies after they were flooded.

The UK's Foreign Office (FCDO) has updated its travel advice to warn that severe weather and flooding is affecting many areas along the Mediterranean coastline of Spain. They add that many parts of the Valencia region and Castilla La Mancha continue to be severely affected by recent flooding. Multiple flights at Valencia's airport appear to be cancelled on Thursday as severe weather warnings have been reinstated in the region. The travel disruption comes two weeks after the city and other areas of Eastern Spain, namely Valencia were hit with devastating flash flooding due to torrential rainstorms, the worst flooding disaster the area has experienced in decades.

In the aftermath of the floods, cars have been piled on the street sur-



rounded by a sea of debris from damaged buildings and structures. More than 200 people have lost their lives after the flooding swept through streets, turning walkways into rivers and trapping people in their homes and on the roofs of cars. It is the worst flood-related catastrophe Spain has witnessed since at least 1996 when 87 people died and 180 were injured in a flash flood near Biescas in the Pyrenees.

Here is the latest on the situation in Spain and what you need to know about travel. Out of the 296 commercial flights that were scheduled at Malaga-Costa Del Sol airport, 15 had been cancelled as of 8pm local time, and around five had been diverted, Spain's airport group, Aena, said. Aena asked that anyone flying from Malaga-Costa Del Sol airport and Barcelona's El Prat Airport to check the status of their flight with their airline, as heavy rain and adverse weather were affecting approaches to both airports.

Aside from the cancellations and diversions, flights arriving and departing from Malaga's airport were largely delayed or disrupted throughout the afternoon, data from FlightRadar shows. As of Thursday morning, most flights coming into the airport were landing on time, while one Iberia flight coming in from Valencia had been cancelled. Most of the scheduled departures flying out from Malaga are also undisrupted, apart from two flights, one to Paris and another to Valencia, that have been cancelled. It appears that Valencia's airport is experiencing disruption, as FlightRadar is showing that around 19 flights scheduled to depart have been cancelled as of Thursday morning.

The airport's website advises passengers flying from Valencia Airport to check official accounts for road and transport status and check with their airline about the status of their flight. Commuter train services in Valencia have also been suspended as of Thursday morning. High-speed train services are starting to operate again after all trains in the Malaga province were halted, national rail infrastructure operator Adif said. Adif announced that commuter trains in

the city and high-speed trains between Antequera and Malaga would be suspended due to the weather.

Simon Calder, travel correspondent at The Independent, says: "Whatever the cause of a cancellation, and regardless of the amount of notice that is given, you can insist upon replacement transport: the airline must get you to your destination as soon as possible if that is what you want." "The UK Civil Aviation Authority says that means if a flight is available on the original day of travel, the passenger must be booked on it - even if it is on a rival carrier." However, cash compensation may not be available, as the airlines may claim the extreme weather means that "meteorological conditions incompatible with the operation of the flight concerned", which means that the cancellation was not the airline's fault.

This week, around 3,000 people living along the Guadalhorce River, and reportedly a further 1,100 near the Vélez River in the Malaga province have been evacuated due to the risk of flooding. The Costa del Sol, including popular tourist destinations like Marbella, Estepona, and Vélez, has been bearing the brunt of the extreme weather.

An expat living in a town in Malaga has described homes and businesses being "decimated" after the river running through its centre burst its banks after the downpour caused water levels to rise. The weather continues to impact Spain two weeks after torrential rain, which had amounted to a year's worth in just eight hours in one region, hit cities such as Valencia and Malaga and caused serious flash flooding. Over 200 people have died, and search and rescue teams have been trying to locate many who are unaccounted for. Thousands of people faced power and water cuts and shortages of essentials last week, especially in the eastern region which was the worst affected. Flooding also hit Barcelona due to intense downfalls battering the region last week. Footage showed cars submerged and rainwater overwhelming towns in the region.

Trump's pledge to axe Dept of Education explained

WASHINGTON (BBC): One of the key promises President-elect Donald Trump made while campaigning for the White House was to abolish the US Department of Education. The federal agency, established in 1979, oversees funding for public schools, administers student loans and runs programmes to help low-income students.

Trump has accused the agency of "indoctrinating young people with inappropriate racial, sexual, and political material". But in order to scrap the department, the incoming Republican president would need congressional approval - an uphill battle. On his own, no. Not only would Trump need congressional approval, but he would also probably need a supermajority - 60 out of 100 senators. While Republicans have a majority in the Senate, they do not have 60 members in the upper chamber, so they would need a few Democrats to vote to abolish the agency. There's zero chance of that. Even in the House of Representatives, Trump would struggle to gain necessary support.

A vote last year to abolish the education department - which was attached as an amendment to another bill - failed to pass as 60 Republicans joined all Democrats in the House to vote no. So Trump's pledge could turn out to be largely symbolic. The Department of Education oversees student loan programmes and administers Pell grants that help low-income students attend university. The department also helps fund programmes to support students with disabilities and for students living in poverty. And it enforces civil rights law that prevents race or sex-based discrimination in federally funded schools. The department's allocation was \$238bn (£188bn) in fiscal year 2024 - under 2% of the total federal budget.

The idea has been floated by Republicans for decades. During Ronald Reagan's 1980 presidential campaign, he pushed for it to be dismantled. Republicans have accused the education department of pushing what they describe as "woke" political ideology on to children, including on gender and race. They want the agency's authority handed to the US states, which run most education matters. Conservatives also argue that other education department functions, such as administering loans, should be handled instead by the US Department of Treasury, and that civil rights infractions are the Department of Justice's domain. Trump's allies also want to expand school choice, which would allow students and families to select alternatives to public schools.

Brazil launches G20 social summit

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP): Brazil launched what it called a social summit ahead of next week's Group of 20 meeting of top economies, the first such event focused on drawing civil society input ahead of the main annual summit.

Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira said 40,000 people from G20 countries were expected to attend meetings and panels in revamped warehouses of downtown Rio de Janeiro's port area and nearby Museum of Tomorrow. The main summit takes place in Rio. Vieira told the opening ceremony, also attended by other government ministers and First Lady Rosângela da Silva, that the gathering is part of Brazil's G20 agenda to promote sustainable development and green energy, fight poverty and reduce inequality. "There couldn't be a discussion or effective measures on this issue without welcoming society's contributions," Vieira said. Proposals developed at the social summit will be summarized in a final document to be presented at the leaders' summit. First lady da Silva, known as Janja, said that kicking off the G20 with a social-focused event sets Brazil's presidency apart from prior summits.

Sudan death toll far higher than previously reported

KHARTOUM (BBC): The number of people dying because of the civil war in Sudan is significantly higher than previously reported, according to a new study. More than 61,000 people have died in Khartoum state, where the fighting began last year, according to a report by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine's Sudan Research Group.

Of these, 26,000 people were killed as a direct result of the violence, it said, noting that the leading cause of death across the Sudan was preventable disease and starvation. Many more people have died elsewhere in the country, especially in the western region of Darfur, where there have been numerous reports of atrocities and ethnic cleansing.

Aid workers say the 19-month conflict in Sudan has created the world's worst humanitarian crisis, with many thousands at risk of famine. Until now, the UN and other aid agencies have been using the figure of 20,000 confirmed deaths. Because of the fighting and chaos in the country, there has been no systematic recording of the number of people killed. In May, US special envoy for Sudan Tom Perriello said that some estimates suggested up to 150,000 people had been killed. The Sudan Research Group study comes as Amnesty International said French military technology was being used in the conflict, in violation of a UN arms embargo. On Thursday, the rights group said the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) militia, which is battling the army, was using vehicles in Darfur supplied by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) that are fitted with French hardware. "Our research shows that weaponry designed and manufactured in France is in active use on the battlefield in Sudan," said Amnesty's Secretary General Agnès Callamard.

The BBC has asked for comment from France and the UAE, which has previously denied arming the RSF. The Galix defence system - made in France by companies KNDS and Lacroix - is used for land forces to help counter close-range attacks.

Amnesty said the weapons could be used to commit or facilitate serious rights violations, adding that the French government must ensure the companies "immediately stop the supply of this system to the UAE". The rights group shared images, which it said it had verified, of destroyed vehicles on the ground that had the Galix system visible on them. It said that the UAE and France had a long-standing partnership in the defence sector and cited a parliamentary report indicating that French

companies had delivered about 2.6bn euros (\$2.74bn; £2.16bn) in military equipment to the UAE between 2014 and 2023. It said the companies had a responsibility to respect human rights and to conduct "due diligence throughout their entire value chain".

Amnesty says that it had contacted the affected companies and the French authorities regarding the use of the defence system but had received no response. "If France cannot guarantee through export controls, including end user certification, that arms will not be re-exported to Sudan, it should not authorise those transfers," it said. The UN first imposed an arms embargo in Darfur in 2004, following allegations of ethnic cleansing against the region's non-Arabic population.

Amnesty has called for the embargo to be expanded to the rest of Sudan, and to strengthen its monitoring mechanism following the outbreak of the civil war. Amnesty has urged all countries to stop directly and indirectly supplying arms to Sudan's fighting factions. The paramilitary RSF, led by general Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, has been at war with Sudan's regular army under Abdel Fattah al-Burhan since April 2023 when the two former allies took up arms against each other in a ferocious power struggle.

The RSF has been accused of ethnic cleansing in Darfur, which it has denied, blaming local militias. Both parties have been accused of committing war crimes, with the ongoing fighting leaving thousands dead and millions displaced. In August, a UN-backed committee of experts declared famine conditions in parts of Darfur. The head of the UN World Health Organization (WHO) said starvation was "almost everywhere" following a visit to the country a month later. "The situation in Sudan is very alarming... the massive displacement - it's now the largest in the world, and, of course, famine," director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus then told the BBC.

The confluence of war, hunger, displacement and disease in Sudan has however been overshadowed internationally by the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East. The Sudan Research Group research found that 90% of the deaths in Khartoum were unrecorded, pointing to a potentially similar situation in other regions. However, Mayson Dahab, the lead researcher, said they did not have sufficient data to estimate mortality levels in other parts of the country or determine how many deaths in all could be linked to the war.

BHP, Vale cleared by court over dam disaster

RIO DE JANEIRO (AFP): A Brazilian court on Thursday cleared mining giants BHP and Vale, and their Brazilian joint venture Samarco, of responsibility over a 2015 dam collapse that caused the country's worst ever environmental disaster.

The dam's rupture on November 5, 2015 near the town of Mariana unleashed a giant torrent of toxic mud that swamped villages, rivers and rainforest, killing 19 people on its way to the sea. Scientists say the sludge caused "permanent" pollution on the river Doce and its coastal plain.

Brazil's government filed a criminal complaint against the mining companies and several of their executives over the spill. But a court in Belo Horizonte, capital of southeastern Minas Gerais state, where the disaster occurred, ruled that state prosecutors had failed to prove that "individual behavior contributed directly and decisively to the collapse of the dam." And, in the context of the criminal trial, the doubt... can only be resolved in favor of the accused," the judge wrote.

Pamela Rayane Fernandes, mother of five-year-old girl who died in the tragedy, reacted with disappointment to the companies' acquittal. "Although I expected this response from the Brazilian justice system, it was still a shock to know that in the place where we live, where we come from, they (the state) cannot give us protection," she told AFP. The ruling comes nearly three weeks after Australia's BHP and Brazil's Vale reached a deal with Brazil's government to pay nearly \$30 billion in damages over the collapse of the tailings dam at mine operated by Samarco. The payout is the biggest of its kind for an environmental disaster, according to Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. The companies agreed to pay 100 billion reais (17.5 billion dollars) to local authorities over twenty years and 32 billion reais (\$5.6 billion) towards compensating and resettling the victims, as well as repairing the harm caused to the environment.

Thursday's court decision also comes a month into a

mega-trial in London over BHP's role in the mudslide. More than 620,000 complainants, including 46 Brazilian municipalities and several Indigenous communities, are seeking an estimated \$36 billion (\$47 million) in damages from the company, which denies liability. The dam's failure released a torrent of over 40 million cubic meters of sludge, the equivalent of 12,000 Olympic swimming pools, which flowed through the Doce river channel all the way to the Atlantic Ocean, over 600 kilometers (373 miles) away.

It killed thousands of animals and left over 600 people homeless. Scientists say the mouth of the Doce River and parts of the southeast Atlantic coastline are still contaminated with metals from the spill, affecting the area's population of fish, birds, turtles, porpoises and whales.

BHP and Vale had already agreed in 2016 to pay 20 billion reais (about \$3.5 billion at today's rate) in damages, but the negotiations were reopened in 2021 due to what the government called their "non-compliance".

UN climate talks 'no longer fit for purpose' say key experts

NEW YORK (BBC): The United Nations' COP climate talks are "no longer fit for purpose" and need an urgent overhaul, key experts including a former UN secretary general and former UN climate chief have said. In a letter to the UN, senior figures say countries should not host the talks if they don't support the phase out of fossil energy.

This week the Azerbaijani president told world leaders gathered in his country for COP29 that natural gas was a "gift from God" and he shouldn't be blamed for bringing it to market. That came days after the BBC reported that a senior Azerbaijani official appeared to have used his role at COP to arrange a meeting to discuss potential fossil fuel deals. The UN's climate talks have made significant progress in recent years, despite the fact that

unanimous agreement is needed among almost 200 countries to take action. The Paris climate agreement, signed in 2015, outlines a long-term plan to rein in rising temperatures, as countries strive to keep that rise under 1.5C this century.

They have also agreed to transition away from fossil fuels in energy systems, and to treble renewable power by 2030. But while the authors of this letter recognise these achievements, they feel that the slow-moving COP process is "no longer fit for purpose" in dealing with a fast-moving climate crisis. "Its current structure simply cannot deliver the change at exponential speed and scale, which is essential to ensure a safe climate landing for humanity," said its signatories. They include former UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, former UN cli-

mate chief Christiana Figueres and former president of Ireland Mary Robinson. This year will likely be the warmest on record, with emissions of planet warming gases still rising, while the impacts of warming often outpace the ability of countries to cope. "Planet Earth is in critical condition," said leading climate scientist Johan Rockström, another signatory. "There is still a window of opportunity for a safe landing for humanity, but this requires a global climate policy process that can deliver change at exponential speed and scale," Prof Rockström said.

The letter has been prompted by growing concerns about some of the countries chosen to host COP talks and their ability to deliver a significant advance in the fight against rising temperatures.

SA cuts supplies to thousands of illegal miners hiding underground

JOHANNESBURG (AFP): An estimated 4,000 illegal gold miners are hiding underground in South Africa after the government cut off food and water in an effort to "smoke them out" and arrest them. The miners have been in a mineshaft in Stilfontein, in the North West province, for about a month.

They have refused to cooperate with authorities as some are undocumented - coming from neighbouring countries like Lesotho and Mozambique - and fear being deported. Illegal miners are called "zama zama" ("take a chance" in Zulu) and operate in abandoned mines in the mineral-rich country. Illegal mining costs the South African government hundreds of millions of dollars in lost sales each year. Many South African mines have closed down in recent years and workers have been sacked. To survive, the miners and undocumented migrants go beneath the surface to escape poverty and dig up gold to sell it on the black market. Some spend months underground - there is even a small economy of people selling food, ciga-

rettes and cooked meals to the miners.

Local residents have pleaded with the authorities to assist the miners, but they have refused. "We are going to smoke them out. They will come out. We are not sending help to criminals. Criminals are not to be helped - they are to be persecuted [sic]," said Minister in the Presidency Khumbudzo Ntshavheni. Police are hesitant to go into the mine as some of those underground may be armed. Some are part of criminal syndicates or "recruited" to be in one, Busi Thabane, from Benchmarks Foundation, a charity which monitors corporations in South Africa, told the BBC's NewsDay programme.

Without any access to supplies, conditions underground are said to be dire. "It is no longer about illegal miners - this is a humanitarian crisis," said Ms Thabane. On Thursday, community leader Thembele Botman told the BBC that volunteers had used ropes and seat belts to pull a body out of the mine. "The stench of decomposing bodies has left the vol-

unteers traumatised," he said. It's not clear how the person died.

Although the authorities have been blocking food and water, they have temporarily allowed local residents to send some supplies down by rope. Mr Botman said they had been communicating with the miners by notes written on pieces of paper. Police have blocked off entrances and exits in an effort to compel the miners to come out. This is part of the Vala Umgodi, or "Close the Hole", operation to curb illegal mining. Five miners were pulled out by rope, but they were frail and weak. Paramedics attended to them, and then they were taken into police custody.

In the last week, 1,000 miners have emerged and been arrested. Police and the army are still at the scene waiting to detain those who are not in need of medical care after resurfacing. "It's not as easy as the police make it seem - some of them are fearing for their lives," said Ms Thabane.

Many miners spend months underground in unsafe conditions to provide for their families. "For many of them it's the only

way they know how to put food on the table," said Ms Thabane. Local residents have also attempted to convince the miners to come out of the mineshaft.

"Those people must come out because we have brothers there, we have sons there, the fathers of our kids are there, our children are struggling," local resident Emily Photosola told AFP. The South African Human Rights Commission says it will investigate the police for depriving the miners of food and water. It said there is concern that the government's operation could have an impact on the right to life. Minister Ntshavheni's remarks have provoked mixed reaction from South Africans, with some praising the government's unyielding approach.

"I love this. Finally, our government is not tiptoeing on these serious matters. Decisiveness will help this country," one person wrote on X. While others felt the stance was inhumane. "In my view, this kind of talk from the Minister in the Presidency is disgraceful and dangerous hate speech," one user said.

Sri Lankan leader's coalition headed for victory

COLOMBO (BBC): The alliance of Sri Lanka's new leader is headed for victory in the country's snap parliamentary elections, according to partial official results. President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's National People's Power (NPP) coalition has so far won 97 seats and more than 60% of the vote. It needs 113 seats in the 225-member house to secure a majority.

Dissanayake, who was elected in September, needs a clear majority to deliver his promise to combat corruption and restore stability

after the island's worst-ever economic crisis. The high cost of living was one of the key issues for many voters.

Analysts expect the NPP to do well in the elections but what remains to be determined is the margin of victory, and whether it gets the two-thirds majority it wants to be able to pass its ambitious reforms. In the outgoing assembly, Dissanayake's Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) party, which now leads the NPP, had just three seats. More results are expected. "We believe that this is a

crucial election that will mark a turning point in Sri Lanka," the 55-year-old Dissanayake told reporters on Thursday after voting in the capital Colombo. Nearly two-thirds of former MPs chose not to run for re-election, including prominent members of the former ruling Rajapaksa dynasty. Sajith Premadasa, the man Dissanayake defeated in the presidential elections, led the opposition alliance. Dissanayake called for snap elections shortly after he became president to seek a fresh

mandate to pursue his policies. There was "no point continuing with a parliament that is not in line with what the people want", he had said. Out of 225 seats in the parliament, 196 MPs will be directly elected. The rest will be nominated by parties based on the percentage of votes they get in what is known as proportional representation. High inflation, food and fuel shortages precipitated a political crisis in 2022 which led to the ousting of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

The Frontier Post

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Xi sees an opportunity

AS leaders from across the world gather for two major summits in South America in the coming days, the uncertainty brought by Donald Trump's impending return to the White House is expected to loom large. Many will be grappling with what Trump's "America First" agenda will mean for the global economy and the grinding conflicts in Europe and the Middle East. China, perhaps more than most countries, will be bracing for fractious relations ahead with the United States. But for Chinese leader Xi Jinping, the upcoming gatherings provide an opportunity in the wake of Trump's election victory to advance Beijing's own objectives: driving a wedge between the US and its allies and presenting China as an alternative, stable leader.

How well Beijing makes its case at the APEC summit of 21 Asia-Pacific economies in Peru this week, followed by a meeting of the Group of 20 (G20) major economies in Brazil next week could be critical to China weathering the anticipated coming storm. In his first term, Trump unleashed a trade and tech war with China and reframed the rising power as an American rival - a path largely followed by his successor Joe Biden, who further irked Beijing by bringing US allies and partners along on his China policy. And with Trump's second term raising the threat of further heavy tariffs and uncertainty, Xi and his delegation will be carefully calibrating their diplomacy at the two meetings. President Biden, Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese are among the leaders also expected to attend both summits, while Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will attend the G20.

"It makes sense for Chinese officials to use these big events to try and shape some of the international narratives right now," said Li Mingjiang, an associate professor of international relations at Singapore's Nanyang Technological University. "Since there's not much time before January 2025," Trump has proposed hitting all Chinese imports to the US with upwards of 60% tariffs and could deepen Biden-era policy constraining Beijing's access to sensitive high tech. He also appears to be looking to fill his cabinet with China hawks, asking Congressman Mike Waltz to be his national security adviser, according to CNN reporting, and Marco Rubio to join the administration as secretary of state.

Xi's congratulatory message to Trump last week appeared to show some of Beijing's concerns. The Chinese leader warned that the two countries "will both benefit from cooperation and lose from confrontation," according to China's Foreign Ministry. Xi may look to underscore that message during a final meeting with Biden that senior US officials said would take place Saturday in Lima. Beijing would use such a meeting to signal that it wants communication and stability in the relationship, observers say. But as questions loom over how tense US-China ties could become, Beijing sees good relations with a wide range of other countries - and unrestricted access to their markets - as key to protecting its economy. That's especially as it grapples with slowing growth, weak consumer demand and high unemployment at home. And in Beijing's eyes, global uncertainty about Trump creates an opening for it to chip away at what, under Biden, had been increasing coordination between the US and its allies in trade, security and other areas to counter the perceived threat from China.

Many of the leaders that worked alongside Biden will be watching warily how Trump, known for his erratic and transactional brand of diplomacy, may alter their relations when he starts his term in January. The president-elect has threatened 10% tariffs on goods imported to the US from all countries, including close partners. He's called on US allies in Asia to pay more to host American troops - and said he would encourage Russia to do "whatever the hell they want" to any NATO member country that doesn't meet spending guidelines on defense. "China wants to signal that it's not going to be very wise to completely side with the US - and to consider working with China as well," said Liu Dongshu, an assistant professor of international affairs at the City University of Hong Kong. Beijing has already taken steps to improve its relationships with America's key allies and partners in recent months, for example opening visa-free entry to China for citizens of multiple European countries and resuming a trilateral summit with Japan and South Korea.

Xi and another close US partner, Indian leader Modi, met for their first formal bilateral meeting in five years in October, after reaching an agreement on military disengagement along their contested border - a significant step to ease tensions. Earlier this month, Chinese Premier Li Qiang pledged to leaders and executives at a trade expo that China would open its market further to create "great global opportunities." Xi and his delegation are likely to continue to telegraph such messages to US partners during the summit meetings in Lima and Rio de Janeiro, while also looking to project China as a leading power that's dedicated to global stability. "For G20 and APEC, China's message will be 'There is major uncertainty ahead, but China is the certainty and will remain committed to peace and development,'" said Yun Sun, director of the China program at the Stimson Center think tank in Washington. Chinese leaders, however, will face an uphill struggle to win the trust of US partners across both Europe and Asia, observers say.

Regardless of any frictions with the future US president, those countries have watched with alarm as Xi has ramped up his aggression in the South China Sea and toward Taiwan, while backing Russian leader Vladimir Putin as he wages war on Ukraine. Still, they may have no choice but to collaborate with China more, should Trump repeat decisions of his first term to retreat from organizations like the World Health Organization or international agreements like the Paris climate accord. Such moves would also bolster Xi's long-standing aim to reshape the international liberal order he sees as unfairly skewed toward the US - and pitch China as its alternative leader. His vision has so far found most support in the Global South, where China's Belt and Road Initiative and other development efforts have already expanded Beijing's clout.

"If America is withdrawing from the global system, there is a space for someone else to step in - and China is one of the very few countries who both have some capacity and some intention to fill in that gap," said Liu in Hong Kong. China's capacity to do so, however, is linked to the strength of its economy - and how it copes with potential further pressure from the US, he added. As such, Beijing may proceed with care both in its diplomacy in the days ahead and its broader international efforts, according to Sun in Washington. "Beijing does worry about Trump's wrath and what he could do to damage China's interest on a bilateral level," she said. "China will have to balance its advancement for global leadership with considerations of relations with the US, and to avoid poking Trump in the eye."

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Why Trump trying to outrage Washington with his Cabinet picks

Stephen Collinson

DONALD Trump's increasingly provocative Cabinet picks have left some Republican senators aghast and Washington in shock. But they really shouldn't. Because the outrage is the point. The president-elect reached a new level on Wednesday, announcing Florida Republican Matt Gaetz - one of his most zealous agents of disruption, who, like him, was once investigated by the Justice Department - as his pick for attorney general.

Tulsi Gabbard, the one-time Democratic presidential candidate, who now shares Trump's belief that the intelligence community has been weaponized against him, will be America's new top spy, if confirmed as director of national intelligence. The latest selections for Trump's MAGA dream team caused such a stir that they almost overshadowed the pick of Fox News anchor Pete Hegseth to serve as defense secretary on Tuesday night.

But they are perfectly in tune with Trump's campaign trail promises and political project. The dismay engulfing establishment elites contrasted with the euphoria rocketing through conservative networks and social media among Trump fans.

The president-elect draws political strength from his position as an outsider scourge of the establishment, and if his picks are confirmed by the Senate - a huge if in the case of Gaetz - they will be tasked with his mission of defenestrating government and driving out those Trump sees as enemies. Trump won the election and has a mandate for change. And these and other picks are proof of a president-elect who is increasingly powerful and cares little for the critics who warn his second term poses a threat to the rule of law.

Trump's short-lived former first-term communications director Anthony Scaramucci told CNN's Jake Tapper that the president-elect's personnel selections were purposely meant to "own the liberals." Paraphrasing Trump's intent, he added: "Let's pick some triggering people." Pennsylvania Democratic Sen. John Fetterman agreed, telling CNN's Manu Raju of the Gaetz selection: "It's just kind of like a god-tier, kind of trolling, just to trigger a meltdown."

Gaetz - who had been under a House Ethics Committee investigation - resigned from Congress on Wednesday in the wake of Trump's announcement.

The committee, which had been probing allegations that he "engaged in sexual misconduct and illicit drug use, accepted improper gifts, dispensed special privileges and favors to individuals with whom he had a personal relationship, and sought to obstruct government investigations of his conduct" - was due to meet this week to vote on releasing a report, potentially as soon as Friday, CNN reported. But with Gaetz leaving, it's unclear if the information will ever become public. The Florida Republican has repeatedly denied any wrongdoing, including ever having sex with a minor or paying for sex.

The Justice Department, which had pursued a yearslong sex-crimes investigation into him, ultimately decided last year not to pursue criminal charges against Gaetz. Millions of the president-elect's voters agree that his own legal troubles are not the result of criminal wrongdoing but of years of victimization by the Justice Department. They think the Russia investigation in his first term was hatched by the intelligence agencies to destroy him. Trump voters want entire layers of government bureaucrats fired, think regulations contribute to their own economic problems, worry about millions of border crossings by undocumented migrants and oppose Pentagon diversity programs. Trump is their agent of change. And his lightning bolt picks for top government jobs are his lieutenants in that effort.

Hegseth, Gaetz and Gabbard pose questions about Trump's motivations and the direction of his second administration that begins on January 20, not least because of their pro-fessional, ethical or experiential qualities, or lack of them. Is Trump looking for an attorney general to ensure the administering of fair justice? If so, would he have chosen Gaetz, who had been under investigation? But the president-elect's intentions were clear in his announcement of his intent to nominate him: "Few issues in America are more important than ending the partisan Weaponization of our Justice System." Trump's statement seems to play into his long-term aspiration to find an attorney general who defends him and targets his enemies.

Gaetz was a leading proponent of Trump's attempts to steal the 2020 election and has called for the abolition of the FBI, the DOJ and other agencies unless they "come to heel." In this light, the Gaetz pick seems most like a gesture of contempt

for the Justice Department, the prosecutors who work there and the rule of law. "This is an outrageous pick. There is no way around it," CNN legal analyst Elie Honig, a former assistant US attorney, said on CNN International.

News that Hegseth had been picked to lead the Pentagon rocked Washington the night before the Gaetz pick and sparked similar questions about Trump's motives. The Fox News star has a military record marked by valor after serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. But he has little of the deep experience in high-level strategy, international diplomacy and national security that is normally required of those in charge of the planet's most powerful military. He, therefore, risks being out-matched on a call with a grizzled Russian or Chinese defense minister if he was called upon to defuse a sudden crisis. But Hegseth's years on Fox demonstrate that he's highly qualified to lead a culture war inside the Defense Department given his condemnation of diversity programs, women serving in combat and advocacy for Trump to free service personnel accused of war crimes.

Gabbard also has a distinguished military record. But she appears to have been picked to lead the DNI because of her suspicions of the covert community as Trump seeks to clean out what he calls "corrupt actors" he views as disloyal. Among the former Hawaii congresswoman's many clashes with the US intelligence community are her doubts that Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad was guilty of war crimes after a chemical weapons attack. And she was accused of "parrotting" false propaganda from America's premier espionage adversary, Russia, by no less than Utah GOP Sen. Mitt Romney.

Not all Trump's picks are contentious. Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, his selection for secretary of state, has drawn skepticism over his conversion to Trump's America Firstism, but many of his fellow senators regard him as a serious thinker on foreign affairs, especially on China. And the president-elect has earned the right to choose who he wants to help him fulfill his mandate. But like most of Trump's other staff picks, Gabbard, Hegseth and Gaetz share several things in common.

They are unfailingly loyal to the president-elect. They are all avid proponents of the stunt politics that he pioneered as a social media provocateur. And if

the 45th and 47th president is intent, as he says, on a second term of "retribution" - they look like they may be willing to honor his orders.

There was a growing sense in Washington on Wednesday night that with the Gaetz pick at least, Trump may have overreached for the first time as president-elect, even with normally supportive Republicans. One of his few GOP critics, Alaska Sen. Lisa Murkowski called the Florida Republican an "unserious candidate" when asked by CNN about his chances for confirmation. Maine Sen. Susan Collins, another rare Republican Trump critic, said she was "shocked" to hear the news and noted there would be an extensive background check by the FBI over the impending nomination. Iowa Republican Sen. Joni Ernst said that Gaetz "is going to have a lot of work to do."

The Gaetz selection created an immediate crisis for South Dakota Sen. John Thune, hours after he won the leadership of the incoming Republican majority. Thune is certain to come under severe pressure from the president-elect to ensure that Gaetz is seated at the Justice Department. The former and future president's allies were already rallying around Gaetz and warning of consequences should he be blocked by the Senate conducting its constitutional role of advise and consent. "I love Matt Gaetz," Alabama Sen. Tommy Tuberville said, warning that it would be risky for senators to vote against him." He added, "We got all 53 Republicans - you're going to tell me that one Republican is going to vote against one of Trump's team? If that happens, it ought to blow us all up. It's crazy," Tuberville said. (CNN has not yet projected the Pennsylvania Senate race, which is headed to a recount, leaving the GOP at 52 seats.)

A president-elect who feels liberated from constraints after his election victory may not yet be finished rocking the boat with his positions yet to be announced, including secretaries of the Treasury and Health and Human Services.

It is no wonder Trump started this week demanding GOP senators acquiesce to his demands for recess appointments for nominees if they cannot win swift confirmation. Trump has set up the first test of whether there will be any pushback from a new Republican Senate majority against a president who believes he will be all powerful once he's sworn in.

CNN

A blueprint for youth inclusion in climate diplomacy

Amna Bint Abdullah Al Dahak

OVER the course of my career, I have had the extraordinary opportunity of interacting with young people from all corners of the world, engaging with their perspectives on everything from climate leadership to education and diplomacy.

In particular, my encounters with Japanese students have always prompted me to reflect on how both the United Arab Emirates and Japan have innovation at their core. Our countries are also distinguished by a deep-rooted respect for our elders, accompanied by a continuous desire to uplift our youth and provide them with a better future.

This shared North Star has threaded across the interactions I have had with young people from the UAE to Japan and across Asia - all brought together by a strong sense of urgency and purpose combined with resilience and optimism. For many young climate leaders, building resilience is not a distant goal but a present one. Their motivation, energy and passion are vital to igniting global climate action and integrating new perspectives into tackling this complex challenge.

The voices needed to drive progress convened at COP28 - the United Nations climate change conference held in Dubai last year - including business, civil society, youth and indigenous communities, creating an unprecedented forum for open dialogue. Inclusivity was at the heart of a transformational course correction achieved by changing the way we talk about cocreating climate resilience. As we look to COP29 - which kicked off in Baku, Azerbaijan, on Monday and runs until Nov. 22 - and beyond, young people must continue to be deeply embedded in international climate diplomacy. The goal is to ensure that their priorities, aspirations and unique perspectives are accounted for as the world meets again to accelerate climate action.

The establishment of the Youth Climate Champion (YCC) at COP28 was emblematic of a shared vision to engage a broad range of voices to deliver inclusive outcomes while bringing much-needed attention, ambition and action to the places most in need. Building on the foundations of the COP27 youth envoy - a position established at the UN climate conference in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, in 2022 - the YCC is designed to amplify the voices of youth-led and youth-focused organizations within global climate diplomacy, facilitating meaningful inclusion and representation and ensuring world leaders understand the unique challenges that young people face. As we look to COP29, the YCC must continue to serve as a conduit between the conference's presidency and youth stakeholders. Most importantly, the YCC's work extends beyond UN climate negotiations, happening at the local, regional and global levels during major events, from Asia-Pacific Climate Week to Climate Week NYC, which takes place in conjunction with the UN General Assembly.

These platforms are vital to ensuring that the perspectives of young people across communities on the front lines of climate change, including Japan, are brought to the forefront of global conversations. They also boost capacity-building opportunities for young leaders, as well as allowing them to explore mechanisms to fund innovations that tackle climate challenges. The complex challenges of climate change vary widely across different ecosystems. Many young people are already tackling them in their respective communities, leveraging the power of technology to explore new ways of building resilience. Creating platforms where these climate leaders can convene to exchange best practices is key to accelerating innovation and capacity-building, particularly in fragile communities.

In an effort to expand youth participation from underrepresented groups, the COP28 presidency established the International Youth Climate Delegate Program (IYCDP), selecting over 100 delegates from around the world to contribute to the negotiations process - the largest initiative to expand youth participation in international climate diplomacy to date. Most notably, the program prioritized delegates from least developed countries, small island developing states, indigenous peoples and other minority groups. From Asia, the IYCDP featured young climate leaders from Thailand, Singapore and Indonesia, among others, working on everything from increasing small businesses' participation in the green energy transition to strengthening emergency responses to natural disasters.

Bringing this vision to life requires more bilateral and multilateral pathways that foster deeper, multifaceted cooperation. It has been incredibly exciting to witness how young people and climate leaders across the UAE and Japan are working together to cocreate a climate resilient future. Earlier this year, I met with former Japanese agriculture minister Tetsushi Sakamoto to discuss how our countries can deepen bilateral cooperation in food security and marine conservation.

While the UAE and Japan are home to very different climates and environments, we are both focused on building long-term resilience through innovation and technology. It has been invigorating to exchange knowledge around everything from precision farming to smart greenhouses and biotechnology. As we look to COP29 and beyond, multilateral partnerships and global initiatives such as the Agriculture Innovation Mission for Climate, known as AIM for Climate, and the Mangrove Alliance for Climate - both of which Japan and the UAE are key partners to - will be pivotal in crystallizing greater collaboration and empowering youth to continue exploring and innovating. In many ways, the next generation is already leading the charge in accelerating climate action - we must continue elevating their voices and impact, empowering them to build a more resilient and optimistic future.

The Japan Times

As climate change worsens, so too will natural disasters

Erin Coughlan de Perez

THESE days it's hard to escape news stories discussing how climate change is contributing to extreme weather disasters, including the recent US hurricanes. Aid agencies are increasingly worried about the widespread damage.

A growing question as these disasters worsen in a warming world is how to pay for recoveries, particularly in poorer countries that have contributed the least to climate change. I am a climate scientist who researches disasters, and I work with disaster managers on solutions to deal with the growing risk of extreme events. The usual sources of aid funding haven't come close to meeting the need in hard-hit countries in recent years. Groups are developing more effective approaches, in some cases delivering aid before the damage occurs.

Countries typically rely on a few ways to send money and aid to other countries that need help when disasters hit. They can send direct government-to-government aid, contribute to aid coordinated by the United Nations, or support response efforts by groups such as the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. However, these efforts are almost never enough. In 2023, the amount of humanitarian funding through the UN was about \$22 billion. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimated that countries hit hard by disasters actually needed about \$57 billion in UN humanitarian aid to cover resources such as emergency food aid and safe drinking water. This does not include the costs borne directly by residents and their governments as they rebuild.

At the UN climate conference in 2022, participating countries agreed to create a new method - a fund for loss and damage, generally defined as conse-

quences of climate change that go beyond what people are able to adapt to. The goal of the fund is for countries that historically have done the most to cause climate change to provide funding to other countries that did little to cause it, yet are experiencing acute climate-related disasters.

So far, however, the loss and damage fund is tiny compared to the cost of climate-related disasters. As of late September 2024, the total pledges were about \$700 million. According to one estimate, the annual costs directly attributable to climate change, including loss of life, are about 150 times that at more than \$100 billion. One goal of the 2024 UN climate conference, underway now through Nov. 22 in Azerbaijan, is to increase those contributions. There are still many areas of debate around the loss and damage fund, including whether investing in a coun-

try's resilience to future disasters counts toward it, whether existing financial systems should be used to channel money to countries in need, and what damages are truly beyond the limits to adaptation.

The fund is only part of a mosaic of initiatives. The disaster management community is getting creative about helping countries finance disaster risk reduction and response. Traditionally, humanitarian funding arrives after a disaster happens, when photos and videos of the horrible event encourage governments to contribute financial support and needs assessments are completed. However, with today's technology, it's possible to forecast many climate-related disasters before they happen, and there is no reason for the humanitarian system to wait to respond until after the disaster happens.

A global network of aid

groups and researchers I work with has been developing anticipatory action systems designed to make funding available to countries when an extreme event is forecast but before the disaster hits.

Traditional insurance, however, can be expensive and slow to assess individual claims. One solution is "index insurance" that pays out based on drought information without needing to wait to assess the actual losses. African nations created an anticipatory drought insurance product that can pay out when the drought starts happening, without waiting for the end of the season to come and crops to fail.

This could, in theory, allow farmers to replant with a drought-resilient crop in time to avoid a failed harvest. Another promising area of innovation is the design of social services that can scale up when needed for extreme weather events. These are called climate-

smart social protection systems. For example, existing programs that provide food for low-income families can be scaled up during and after a drought to ensure that people still have sufficient and nutritious food. This requires government coordination among the variety of social services offered and is a promising way to support vulnerable communities in the face of the rising number of extreme weather events.

These novel mechanisms to finance disaster risk are exciting, but they should be coupled with investments in adaptation and resilience so that extreme weather events cause less damage. Communities will need to take steps such as planting different crops, building flood drainage systems and living in adaptive buildings. Managing climate risk requires a variety of innovative solutions before, during and after disaster events.

The Los Angeles Times

Kremlin said Trump-Putin phone call never happened. Why?

Alexander Dubowy

ON the evening of Nov. 10, The Washington Post reported that US President-elect Donald Trump had a phone conversation with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Nov. 7. The conversation focused on peace in Europe, with Trump expressing interest in further discussions to resolve the conflict in Ukraine. Reportedly, Trump explicitly warned Putin against escalating the conflict in Ukraine, underscoring the substantial presence of US military forces in Europe.

However, the day after the report, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov dismissed all rumors of a phone call between Trump and Putin as "pure fiction" and "fake news." "This is a particularly vivid example of the quality of information published these days, even in quite reputable publications. It is absolutely untrue. It is pure fiction, simply fake news," he emphasized during a media briefing.

But who is telling the truth? Ultimately, both Trump and Putin are familiar with the political tool of deception. As Helmut Brandstätter, an Austrian Member of the European Parliament from the liberal party NEOS, aptly put it, "I'm not sure whom I should trust less..." It is clear that Trump initiated to conversation with Putin and that The Washington Post's evidence came from Trump's team. It is also noteworthy that the story was broken by a newspaper that refrained from endorsing a presidential candidate for the first time in decades.. Another indication that

the call took place is the recent discussion between Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, Trump and Elon Musk. This suggests a relatively low likelihood of deliberate deception by Trump.

At the same time, this would be far from the first instance of Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov deliberately distorting reality or denying events that have indeed occurred. But why would the Kremlin feel it necessary to deny any exchange with the incoming US president?

Could Moscow be aiming to avoid overstepping diplomatic protocols or needlessly embarrassing President Joe Biden? If that is the case, then why did the Kremlin not simply refrain from commenting altogether? Why would the Kremlin, in effect, indirectly accuse the future US president of lying in plain view of the global public?

Or is this all part of a secret, behind-the-scenes agreement between Washington and Moscow? These are certainly valid questions. But at the moment, there seem to be no clear answers. Equally valid, however, is another question that could potentially lead to an explanation. Why does Russian state television feature semi-nude photos of Trump's wife, Melania, during prime time to gleeful commentary from two leading propagandists? This provocative display is yet another element of Russia's negotiation strategy: signaling a willingness to talk without any intent to compromise, creating confusion,

showing no weakness, projecting strength, humiliating negotiating partners, blaming others for the failure of talks, and so forth.

However, the Kremlin is using these smokescreens as distractions, so it is important not to take them at face value. The essential question remains: Why would Putin, at this point in time, genuinely be prepared to make any concessions? So far, no one has been able to provide a credible answer to that. Nevertheless, there are at least two credible reasons for Russia's feigned willingness to engage in dialogue.

The first lies in the issue of status, which Russia's long-standing leader has mentioned repeatedly in recent weeks, including in an interview with BBC journalist Steve Rosenberg. The Kremlin sees a dialogue on equal footing with the United States as valuable in itself. Moscow is fixated on the idea that Russia should stand as an equal (or nearly equal) partner with still the only other global power, the United States, in determining the fates of the world. In this context, the actual outcomes of such discussions are ultimately secondary. For Russia, the proverbial journey is its own reward. The Russian regime's tactical ruse provides the second explanation. Moscow views the war in Ukraine as an extension of conventional politics. Thus, the Kremlin employs a range of political, diplomatic and propagandistic measures alongside military actions in the conflict.

While this military aspect is

important for Russia, it is not decisive for the outcome of the war. For the Kremlin weakening the ties between Ukraine and the West is central to Moscow's success. A similar path lies in gradually undermining the cohesion of the Western alliance and loosening the bonds of the transatlantic relationship as a whole. By instrumentalizing Trump's diplomatic (or undiplomatic) maneuvers, Moscow is aiming to sow distrust among Western allies. Denying even the existence of a phone call casts the incoming US administration as unreliable in the eyes of the global public and, most importantly, its allies weeks before it even takes office.

The Kremlin sends out mixed signals to amplify this effect: on the one hand, indicating a willingness to engage in talks, while on the other, asserting the non-negotiability of its positions. Kremlin spokesperson Peskov, just days after Trump's election victory, stated that while Putin was open to discussions with Trump regarding Ukraine, Russia's war objectives would remain unchanged. Peskov emphasized that the Russian president had not once suggested that the goals of the war might be altered. The Kremlin intentionally seeks to instill doubt within the transatlantic community. Russia's psychological warfare strategy focuses on instilling fear, uncertainty, and distrust, particularly among allies. After all, Putin would like nothing more than to push the transatlantic alliance to the brink of collapse through mutual suspicion.

The Moscow Times

Intel agencies, already anxious over Trump

Katie Bo Lillis

INSIDE the US intelligence community, a deep wariness about a second Trump administration has set in, stoked by memories of the antagonistic relationship the nation's spy agencies had with Donald Trump the last time he was president.

But when news broke Tuesday evening that Trump had selected as his CIA Director John Ratcliffe, the former director of national intelligence, some career officials were cautiously optimistic, seeing Ratcliffe as a largely professional and potentially less disruptive choice than some other former officials believed to have been under consideration. "As good as it was going to get," said one intelligence official.

"Relief over alternative names suggested," said another. "It could have been a lot worse," said a third intelligence official. Current and former officials also cautioned not to assume that the intelligence community is uniformly opposed to Trump. Across the 18 agencies that make up the intelligence community, including a wide swath of its thousands of analysts and operators, there are plenty who support him and likely welcome his return. "The IC is not a monolith," one former senior official said.

Still, there remains a simmering concern that Trump will run roughshod over bureaucratic norms and cultural traditions. Broadly, multiple career officials told CNN, a sort of fatalism has set in across the community. Analysts and other employees "know what we're in for," said one official.

"We did this before," said still another at a different agency. Some officials are worried about their jobs under a president who has vowed to "clean out" the intelligence community. Others fear Trump will put America's national security at risk by doubling down on what some career officials saw as a cavalier approach to America's most closely-guarded secrets, including his decision to hoard boxes of classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate. And then there's just the stress of working for Trump: For a federal bureaucracy used to a deliberately, sometimes maddeningly slow process for setting policy, Trump's habit of tweeting major national security decisions during his first term often made for a chaotic and unpredictable work environment.

Officials famously struggled to keep his attention during briefings. It was "exhausting," said one official who worked under the first Trump administration. Some federal employees may decide it's simply not worth it and quit or retire. There is "no question" that there are "plenty" of intelligence officials who "would rather be a different POTUS to brief," said one of the officials. "We are committed to ensuring a smooth transition," said one CIA official.

Some career officials had feared that Trump would name Kash Patel as CIA director. The former Republican Hill staffer rose to prominence during the first Trump administration, and worked to declassify intelligence related to Russia that Trump believed would expose wrongdoing in the intelligence community. Patel has remained outspoken about his deep skepticism of the integrity of the IC and may yet find a role, according to one former administration official who has remained in contact with Trump's orbit.

In naming Ratcliffe, the former official said, Trump still made it clear that he remains obsessed with his grievances toward the IC, in particular the assessment that Russia interfered in the 2016 campaign in an effort to get Trump elected. Ratcliffe was among a cohort of Trump officials who aggressively sought the release of intelligence related to Russia and the FBI.

The effort alarmed career officials who feared exposing the intelligence community's precious "sources and methods" for gathering information and even some of Trump's political appointees, including then-CIA director Gina Haspel, pushed back on pieces of the campaign. Some officials have been nervous that the president-elect may seek to resume that effort and are now closely watching who the president chooses as direc-

tor of national intelligence, as well as the CIA's deputy director - a role that requires no Senate confirmation. Ratcliffe at times seemed to walk a middle ground on the issue. In December 2020, when he was the director for national intelligence, then-Attorney General William Barr worked with him to dissuade Trump from declassifying at least a subset of the intelligence related to Russia, arguing that it would damage national security. CNN has previously reported.

"He turned out to be better than expected at ODNI, in that he took interest in the affairs of the community [and] he seemed to want to lead and not be controversial," said one former official. "He didn't come in wanting or intending to damage the intelligence community." But in a profession where intelligence professionals view their

gence community seeks assiduously to keep a mystery to America's adversaries.

He was known to reject assessments that didn't fit his own worldview, most famously refusing to entertain the consensus judgment of the community on Russian involvement in the 2016 election, and as a result, US intelligence officials simply briefed him less often on topics that they knew would ignite resistance. Current and former officials who served during his first administration say they are deeply concerned that a return to that approach will lead allied nations to share less information with the United States; and to the politicization of analysts' assessments, traditionally meant to offer judgments untouched by political calculus. And some fear what they say is the relative inexperience in the intelligence community of the new CIA director. Ratcliffe, a lawyer

In naming Ratcliffe, the former official said, Trump still made it clear that he remains obsessed with his grievances toward the IC, in particular the assessment that Russia interfered in the 2016 campaign in an effort to get Trump elected. Ratcliffe was among a cohort of Trump officials who aggressively sought the release of intelligence related to Russia and the FBI. The effort alarmed career officials who feared exposing the intelligence community's precious "sources and methods" for gathering information and even some of Trump's political appointees, including then-CIA director Gina Haspel, pushed back on pieces of the campaign. Some officials have been nervous that the president-elect may seek to resume that effort and are now closely watching who the president chooses as director of national intelligence, as well as the CIA's deputy director - a role that requires no Senate confirmation.

jobs as "speaking truth to power," especially to the president, there's worry Ratcliffe could succumb to shaping the analysis in a way Trump would prefer. "Would he stand up to Trump, or other voices?" the same official asked. "That's where I have doubt." Trump officials broadly believe that an entrenched bureaucracy of career civil servants - meant to follow the policy direction set by political appointees - has grown too powerful, complaining that officials frequently stepped beyond their remit to slow-roll or stymie directions from then-President Trump simply because they didn't like them during his first administration.

"You have people in the way who are purposely not doing what's being asked of them or not trying to implement the president's policies because they personally disagree with it," said one former official who worked with Patel during the first Trump administration. For some inside the intelligence community, of course, those officials were providing an important check on a president disinterested in following either norms or laws.

Memories of the tumultuous first Trump administration remain fresh in the minds of many career officials. One senior intelligence official said some veterans in his office told "war stories" on the morning after the election.

On several occasions, Trump alarmed some career officials with how he handled classified information - not just with his decision to keep top-secret documents at his Florida estate after he left the White House. In 2017, he was accused of disclosing highly-sensitive Israeli intelligence to top Russian officials during an Oval Office session. In 2019, he tweeted a classified image of an Iranian rocket launch site taken by one of America's most exquisite satellites - a demonstration of the kind of capability the intelli-

and a member of the US House until 2020, served less than a year as the director of national intelligence. He replaces Bill Burns, a career State Department diplomat with decades of experience working hand-in-glove with the intelligence community on sensitive issues like Russia and the Iran nuclear deal.

But for much of the workforce, multiple current intelligence officials serving in roles ranging from mid-level to senior told CNN, the more immediate concern is their jobs. Trump has promised in his second term to "clean out all of the corrupt actors in our national security and intelligence apparatus," which he is expected to do by reclassifying a large portion of the federal civilian workforce to make it easier to fire them - an effort commonly referred to as "Schedule F" for the new employment category he sought to create at the end of his first term. "People are just really worried about them cleaning house, about people losing jobs, about Schedule F and how far that will go," said one former senior intelligence official who is still in touch with former colleagues.

That fear poses a potential risk not just to individual federal employees but also to national security, the former official and another senior US intelligence official said. If analysts start to "self-censor" for fear of angering the president and losing their job, it could lead to the kind of bad analysis, missed warnings and faulty logic that officials refer to as "intelligence failures," these people said.

The classic example is the IC's incorrect judgment after September 11, 2001, that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction - now often pointed to by intelligence scholars as the natural consequence of the politicization of intelligence. That assessment became the Bush administration's predicate for the war in Iraq.

Sue Gray's final departure marks the moment that Starmer project gets serious

Martin Kettle

SUE Gray's departure matters. But not in the way some may assume. Gray became famous because of three things: her Partygate investigation under Boris Johnson, her recruitment to Keir Starmer's team in opposition and for having once run a pub in Northern Ireland. It all turned her into just about the only British civil servant whom people beyond Whitehall might recognise on the news.

It was therefore predictable that her fall from power would also be depicted in personality terms. Sure enough, Gray's original ousting in October was attributed to a turf war with Morgan McSweeney, now her successor as Downing Street chief of staff. Or to the fact that Labour special advisers were disgruntled over their pay differentials. Gray's final exit this week was also reportedly triggered by Starmer's frustration that she had not started work on the job to which he demoted her five weeks ago.

There is likely some truth in all of this. There was too much internal hurt, anger and mistrust around Gray. But this misses the larger, less personalised reason why her leaving is important. More than 18 months ago, a senior Labour official put it succinctly. Starmer had recruited Gray "for one sole purpose, preparing Labour for government". Unlike Starmer himself, and unlike most of those in line to be his ministers, Gray knew not just how Whitehall worked, but how it ought to work better. Her job was to ensure that the new government hit the ground running.

Instead, the government hit the ground stumbling. The July election meant parliament was slow to get into its stride, resulting in a stop-start summer and a lack of political direction. Universal winter fuel payments to the over-65s were then clumsy-

ly abolished, an amateurish error. There were easily avoidable pratfalls over gifts and freebies, which ministers foolishly tried to defend. All this bore little relationship to the change that Labour had promised and for which the public had voted.

It was very damaging. But it could all have been foreseen. It certainly should have been far better handled. But not even this was what brought Gray down. The cause of her fall was that Gray's idea of how government ought to work was felt to have wilted under the realities of office. In particular, it did not satisfy Starmer himself, as he gradually became accustomed to having his feet under the Downing Street desk.

Gray's failure, according to insider critics this week, was that she prepared Labour for government in exactly the wrong way. She did not accept the reality that, in modern politics and government, the centre will always want to shape what is done at departmental level. She instead encouraged ministers to trust the Whitehall machine, and to run their departments with their own goals and their own departmental narratives. It was this fundamental difference of approach that led to her being forced out.

By October, Starmer had had enough. There seem to have been two main reasons. First, Gray did not prioritise the government's so-called missions - the yardsticks by which Starmer wishes Labour to be judged when the next election comes round. All of these - clean energy, highest G7 growth, NHS reform, educational opportunities and safer streets - are cross-departmental projects. So is the unofficial sixth mission: control of borders. Only the centre of government, Starmer told a meeting of the cabinet last

week, can ensure that departments work together to deliver them.

Starmer's second reason is that, in reality, it is he, more than any minister, who has to answer to the public for the success or failure of the government's priorities. His desk is where the buck stops. There is simply no other way. Like it or not, it is the prime minister - in press interviews, in parliament and when the next election comes - who has to make the case for the government's departmental priorities.

This is why, in part, it was Starmer himself who went to the Cop29 summit in Baku this week to announce new commitments to cleaner energy goals. No 10 believes that the government's big themes, on which its re-election hopes will depend, need to be led from Downing Street and by the prime minister himself. The decision to go to Baku directly reflects what has changed with Gray's departure.

It will now be followed by others. Starmer has spent a lot of time abroad in the government's early months, largely because the diary required his attendance at a succession of international gatherings, of which next week's G20 summit in Brazil will be the next in a long line that started with the European political community summit at Blenheim Palace in July.

Expect, though, before Christmas, to see Starmer starting to play a much more central role on domestic policy, too. There are at least two such events in the imminent Downing Street grid now. At least one of them is likely to involve making a case for NHS reforms of the kind that the health secretary, Wes Streeting, announced this week.

This is the context in which stories suggesting the "return of

the Blairites" to Downing Street must be seen. For once, such tales are not exaggerations or scare stories. This time, they are simply true. The Blairites - or some of them - are indeed back. Their return does not embody a change of political direction for the Starmer government. More, it consolidates Starmer's willingness to grasp that Labour's project will not get far in the Trumpian 2020s unless it draws on experienced and politically savvy people who are willing to challenge shibboleths.

The appointment of Tony Blair's former chief of staff Jonathan Powell as national security adviser from the start of December is the most eye-catching example of this. With Starmer refocusing on domestic policy, Powell is likely to carry a lot of the international heavy-lifting. But the return as director of policy delivery and innovation of Liz Lloyd, possessor of one of the driest senses of humour within the old Blair inner circle, is, if anything, more crucial. Most of the mission agenda will rest on her shoulders.

None of this is to claim that Starmer's in-flight rebuilding of his governmental engine is without problems, still less that it will succeed. But it should be seen for what it is: as a very large change moment that makes coherent sense of Gray's departure. Back in the summer, Starmer was still engaged in the "phoney war" early stages of his attempt to refit Labour as a plausible government for the transformed 2020s political landscape. Now he has set his course. Even now, it may all have happened too late to undo the damage that the government inflicted on itself in the early months. Gray's departure, though, marks the moment when the pilot was dropped and the project decided to get serious.

The Guardian

Trump's appointments have electrified West

Con Coughlin

DONALD Trump's impending arrival at the White House is not only having a seismic impact on American politics. It is also creating dramatic changes to the global landscape, especially regarding the conduct of hostile states that will soon find themselves in the new administration's cross hairs. Russia, China, Iran and North Korea are among those that have cause to be concerned about the impact the more robust approach adopted by the incoming Trump administration will have on their fortunes. Even though the president-elect is still in the early stages of forming his new administration, it is already abundantly clear that Trump 2.0 will be a far more formidable beast than Trump 1.0 in terms of its approach to the world's malcontents.

The appointment of Pete Hegseth, a high-profile military veteran and Fox News presenter, as Trump's next defence secretary will certainly concentrate a few minds in places like Moscow and Tehran. A hawk on both Russia and Iran, Hegseth has been a vocal critic of the Biden administration's half-hearted support for Ukraine, and previously called on Trump during his first stint in the White House to launch direct military action against the ayatollahs.

Similarly, Senator Marco Rubio, who is being lined up to become secretary of state, has little

appetite for compromise when dealing with America's foes, arguing against a ceasefire in Gaza on the grounds that Israel should "destroy every element of Hamas they can get their hands on", an approach that stands in stark contrast to the Biden administration's continuing pursuit of a ceasefire-for-hostages deal.

Add to this Trump's appointment of John Ratcliffe, who is convinced that Covid originated from a Chinese research laboratory, as CIA director, and Mike Waltz, another renowned China hawk, as national security advisor, and it is clear that, with the equally hawkish J?D Vance set to become vice president, Washington's foes will mess with the next Trump administration at their peril. The prospect of Trump's imminent return to the Oval Office has certainly had a galvanising impact on America's adversaries, with his election victory forcing them to have a serious rethink about their options.

Nowhere is this more evident than on the Ukrainian battlefield, where Russian president Vladimir Putin has launched a desperate scramble to capture as much territory as possible, even if it means sustaining even greater casualties. There is a general expectation that one of Trump's first moves will be to end the Ukraine conflict, not least because he boasted during the election campaign that he

could do so within 24 hours. This has prompted both Russia and Ukraine to intensify their efforts to capture as much territory as possible to create "facts on the ground" prior to any negotiations taking place. Russia's attempts to retake territory in the southern Kursk region, which was captured by Ukraine in the summer, is proving particularly costly, with the Russian military suffering an astonishing 2,000 casualties a day. With the Russians having sustained in excess of 500,000 casualties since Putin launched his "special military operation" in February 2022, Moscow has now deployed an estimated 10,000 North Koreans troops to support its operations in Kursk, a development that has its own grave implications for Western security.

With China and Iran already providing military support for Moscow's war effort, the introduction of another rogue actor to back Russia's land grab is a graphic reminder of the dramatic changes taking place to the global threat environment.

Nor is this radical change in behaviour confined to Washington's foes. This week's suggestion that the European Commission is looking to change its spending policies to allow greater investment in the bloc's defence and security could prove vital to providing European nations with the wherewithal to protect their interests. This long-

overdue move, which could see tens of billions of euros redirected to fund Europe's defence needs, is a belated acknowledgement that, with Trump back in power, European nations can no longer rely on Washington to defend them.

The commission's overdue initiative is certainly something No?10 should take on board as the UK, in common with the rest of its European allies, is singularly ill-prepared to defend itself without American support.

It is not beyond the bounds of possibility, for example, that Sir Keir Starmer could soon find himself facing calls from Trump for British forces, together with other European allies, to be deployed to Ukraine to patrol a demilitarised zone on Ukraine's eastern border in the event of a ceasefire being implemented.

Given the current parlous state of our Armed Forces, with the Army being reduced to its smallest level since the Napoleonic era, the Government would struggle to meet such a request, a failing that would simply confirm Trump's long-held view that America's key allies are not serious about funding their defence commitments. Trump's imminent return to the White House may be a cause of consternation for America's foes. But it should also serve as a warning that his new administration will expect all Washington's allies to pay their fair share towards the defence of the free world.

The Telegraph



PSX announces top 25 companies awards recipients for 2023

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) is proud to announce the list of Top 25 Companies Awards recipients for the year 2023. The PSX Top 25 Companies Awards, launched in 1978, are a prestigious and widely-respected awards recognising excellence in the corporate sector & industry of Pakistan. The companies that make it to the list of the coveted awards are selected on the basis of their financial performance, governance & operational achievements as well as Sustainability and ESG related initiatives.

In terms of quantitative criteria, PSX selects listed companies which have performed exceptionally in the context of profitability ratios, dividend related ratios, and turnover of shares, among other specific. In terms of qualitative criteria, PSX selects high-performing listed companies based on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), reporting on SDGs, ESG related initiatives, and Diversity & Inclusion, among other considerations.

Announcing the PSX Top 25 Companies Awards winners for 2023, Mr. Nadeem Naqvi, Acting CEO of PSX, stated, "On behalf of Pakistan Stock Exchange, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the recipients of the PSX Top 25 Companies Awards for the year 2023. These awards showcase excellence in Pakistan's corporate, business and industrial landscape whereby the top performing companies who have excelled based on financial, governance, ESG, D&I and other quantitative and qualitative criteria, are

duly recognised and awarded". He further stated, "The winning of this accolade by the respective companies will send a strong message to investors globally and locally that these Pakistani companies and industries are at par with global corporate and industrial performers. Furthermore, winning this prestigious and distinctive award is a clear reflection of the competence and capabilities of such companies in their ability to do business successfully with current, future or potential local and international business partners".

The companies that made it to the Top 25 Companies Awards list in 2023, in order of their ranking, are:

- 1 Engr Corporation Limited
- 2 Engro Fertilizers Limited
- 3 Fauji Fertilizer Company Limited
- 4 The Hub Power Company Limited
- 5 Bank Alfalah Limited
- 6 Habib Bank Limited
- 7 Habib Metropolitan Bank Limited
- 8 Mari Petroleum Company Limited
- 9 Systems Limited
- 10 Cherat Cement Company Limited
- 11 Lucky Cement Limited
- 12 Meezan Bank Limited
- 13 Engro Polymer & Chemicals Limited
- 14 Pakistan Oilfields Limited
- 15 Image Pakistan Limited
- 16 MCB Bank Limited
- 17 Faysal Bank Limited
- 18 Nestle Pakistan Limited
- 19 Adajee Insurance Company Limited
- 20 Indus Motor Company Limited
- 21 International Industries Limited
- 22 United Bank Limited
- 23 Pakistan State Oil Company Limited
- 24 Security Papers Limited
- 25 Bank AL Habib Limited



WOLFSBURG, Germany: One of the two Autostadt Car Towers at the Volkswagen AG headquarters and auto plant complex in Wolfsburg, Germany, on Friday, Nov. 15, 2024. VW laid out cost-savings proposals to workers that would shore up its financial position while potentially avoiding factory closures in Germany.

SCCI' EC asks KP govt to abolish 2 percent cess on export



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Members of the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) Executive Committee demanded of the provincial government to abolish two percent cess on export.

The EC members also called for reviewing the property and professional taxes, otherwise, business and trade, economic activities will be completely ended that would generate unemployment in the province.

A maiden meeting of the newly elected SCCI executive body was held under chairmanship of President Fazal Moqem Khan here at the chamber house.

The meeting was attended by former FPCCI president Ghazanfar Bilour, the chamber senior vice president Abdul Jalil Jan, vice president Shehryar Khan, member of the SCCI executive committee Ziaul Haq Sarhadi, Nadeem Rauf, Aftab Iqbal, Ashfaq Ahmad, Adnan Nasir, Hassan Zahideen, Sabir Ahmad, Saifullah, Gul Zaman, Saddam Hussain, Aafia Walayat, former SCCI presidents Zahidullah Shinwari, Haji Muhammad Afzal, Malik Niaz Ahmad, Zulfiqar Ali Khan, Faiz Muhammad

Faizi, Husnain Khurshid Ahmad, Fuad Ishaq, former Khan Mohmand, Sanaullah Khan, former VPs Javed Akhtar, Ejaz Khan Afriki, Shuja Muhammad, and Saraf Association president SherFarzand, former president IAP Malik Imran Ishaq, Pervez Khan Khattak, Sohail Javed, Affaf Ali Khan, Saddam Gul, Faiz Rasool, Fazle Wahid, Ishtiaq Muhammad, Farhad Asfandiyar, Ihsanullah, Husnain Sheraz, Syed Ejaz Ali Shah, Secretary General Muqtasid Ahsan and others.

Members of the EC committee termed the imposition of 2 percent cess on export from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as an unjust and cruel step of the provincial government and asked to immediately withdraw it.

The export has been shifted to other provinces after the imposition of cess, they added.

The meeting expressed fear that trade and export would be completely vanished if the cess wasn't withdrawn immediately and also it would trigger massive unemployment in the province.

The executive body members said that business and industry in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have already come to a

standstill position due to imposition of heavy taxes.

The participants said after the collection of 2 per cent cess on export by provincial government, the businesses and industry would be completely packing up in the province.

President Fazal Moqem said the entire trade and export process had been halted, which brought an adverse effect on the economy and business.

He further said that no tax has been imposed on exports in any other province of the country, but 2% cess is being charged on exports in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which is discriminatory step of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government with the business community.

The meeting informed property tax and professional tax notices have also been issued to the business community, which amounts to discrimination against the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and the business community.

The SCCI chief said that such actions of the government are increasing the sense of deprivation among the people and business community of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The EC members demanded that the

provincial government withdraw the 2% cess on exports immediately so that the wheel of business and industry can be restored here and the economy can also get stability.

The meeting informed that the cabinet of SCCI will soon meet the Chief Minister and the Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, provincial ministers for Finance, Excise and Taxation, Chief Secretary KP, where the problems of the traders will be discussed and the problems of the business community will be informed in detail to amicably solve them.

The meeting also said the SCCI delegation would present effective suggestions and recommendations for solution of the traders' problems.

Ghazanfar Bilour, Zahidullah Shinwari, Haji Muhammad Afzal, Fuad Ishaq, Zulfiqar Ali Khan, Faiz Muhammad Faizi, executive members and others also spoke on the occasion and presented proposals for resolution of business community issues.

FACE organizes training sessions for boosting agri productivity

F.P. Report

LAHORE: FACE, NPO arm of FFC, invited international expert, Dr. Upendra Singh, Vice President Research & Chief Scientist at IFDC-USA, to train Punjab's Agriculture Department on cutting-edge techniques in a series of multiple training sessions.

The first session was held in Lahore on Monday, November 11, 2024, with Mr. Iftikhar Sahoo, Secretary Agriculture, as the Chief Guest.

Dr. Upendra Singh



shared his expertise on sustainable farming practices to improve crop yields through Site-Specific Nutrient Management, 4R Nutrient Stewardship, and Best Management Practices to reduce nutrient losses

and gaseous emissions from agricultural lands and improve nutrient use efficiency.

"FACE engages international experts to conduct multiple trainings sessions for Agriculture Department

Punjab. Dr. Upendra Singh, Vice President Research & Chief Scientist IFDC-USA conducted the first session in Lahore on November 11, 2024 (Monday).

The trainings focus on improved crop yields through Site-Specific Nutrient Management, 4R Nutrient Stewardship and Best Management Practices to Reduce Nutrient Losses and Gaseous Emissions from Agricultural Lands and improve nutrient use efficiency.

Secretary Agriculture Mr. Iftikhar Sahoo was the chief guest."

US import prices unexpectedly rise in October

WASHINGTON (Reuters): U.S. import prices unexpectedly rose in October amid higher prices for fuels and other goods, the latest indication of lack of progress lowering inflation in recent months.

Import prices rebounded 0.3% last month after an unrevised 0.4% decline in September, the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics said on Friday. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast import prices, which exclude tariffs, slipping 0.1%. In the 12 months

through October, import prices increased 0.8% after dipping 0.1% in September.

Imported fuel prices rose 1.5% after two straight monthly declines. Food prices fell 1.6%, declining for the third consecutive month. Excluding fuels and food, import prices gained 0.4% after rising 0.3% in September. The so-called core import prices increased 2.2% year-on-year in October.

Government data week showed progress lowering inflation back to its 2% tar-

get had essentially stalled. Consumer prices increased 0.2% for a fourth straight month in October while producer prices picked up 0.2%.

That together with tariffs on imported goods expected to be unveiled by President-elect Donald Trump's incoming administration, led economists to believe that the Federal Reserve was unlikely to cut interest rates four times in 2025 as was projected by policymakers in September.

Though the U.S. central

bank is widely expected to deliver a third rate cut in December, some economists say that will be a close call. Fed Chair Jerome Powell said on Thursday that "the economy is not sending any signals that we need to be in a hurry to lower rates."

The Fed embarked on its policy easing cycle with an unusually large half-percentage-point rate cut in September, its first reduction in borrowing costs since 2020. It hiked rates by 525 basis points in 2022 and 2023 to tame inflation.

General Motors lays off about 1,000 workers

DETROIT (AP): General Motors is laying off about 1,000 workers worldwide, shedding costs as it tries to compete in a crowded global automobile market.

The workers, mostly white collar, were notified about the decisions early Friday. The company confirmed the layoffs in a statement but gave few details.

"We need to optimize for speed and excellence," the statement said. "This

includes operating with efficiency, ensuring we have the right team structure and focusing on our top priorities."

GM and other automakers have been navigating an uncertain transition to electric vehicles both in the U.S. and worldwide, trying to figure out where to invest capital and how fast the switch will happen.

The company has had to develop and update gas-

powered models while investing in EV battery and assembly plants as well as minerals and other parts for the next generation of electric vehicles.

Through September, U.S. new EV sales are up 7.2% to about 936,000, according to Motorintelligence.com. That's slower growth than the 47% increase in 2023. But EV sales this year are likely to surpass last year's record of 1.19 mil-

lion, and the EV share of new vehicle sales this year is 7.9%, up from 7.6% last year.

GM has about 150,000 employees worldwide, with the largest group at its technical center in the Detroit suburb of Warren, Michigan. The company had 76,000 white-collar workers worldwide at the end of last year.

Chief Financial Officer Paul Jacobson said last month that GM is on track to reach its goal of cutting \$2 billion in fixed costs by the end of this year.

Last April, about 5,000 GM white-collar workers at General Motors took the company's buyout offers, which the automaker said at the time was enough to avoid layoffs.

The company offered buyouts to white-collar workers with at least five years of service, and global executives who have been with the company at least two years.

At the time GM said it couldn't completely rule out layoffs in the future, saying that "involuntary separations are not a consideration at this point."

Al-Ghazi Tractors inaugurates Agro Show 2024

F.P. Report

LAHORE: CEO of Al-Ghazi Tractors Limited (AGTL), Sakib Eltaff inaugurated the Pakistan Agro Show 2024 at the International Expo Center, Lahore today. The ceremonial opening marks the commencement of one of the country's most anticipated agricultural exhibitions, running from November 14-16.

During the inaugural ceremony, Mr. Eltaff emphasized the transformative potential of agricultural mechanization in Pakistan. "Today, as this remarkable exhibition opens its doors, we're not just showcasing

machinery - we're opening new possibilities for Pakistan's farming future," he stated while cutting the ribbon.

The opening ceremony gathered prominent agricultural stakeholders, industry experts, and farmers, highlighting the show's significance in Pakistan's agricultural calendar. AGTL's pavilion, featuring the newly launched New Holland NH-850 tractor, immediately drew attention from attendees, demonstrating the industry's eagerness for innovative farming solutions.

"Through platforms like the Pakistan Agro Show, we're fostering an environ-

ment where agricultural innovation meets practical farming needs," Mr. Eltaff stated. "The enthusiasm we've witnessed today reflects the farming community's readiness to embrace technological advancement."

The three-day event promises to be a hub of agricultural innovation, featuring the latest in farming machinery, agrochemicals, and sustainable farming practices. AGTL's prominent participation underscores its commitment to advancing Pakistan's agricultural sector through technological innovation and industry collaboration.



ISLAMABAD: Sardar Dr Rashid Ilyas, President the Centaurus Group inaugurating three-day gems and minerals exhibition at Centaurus Mall.

Court Notice

In the Court of Javera Sartaj Khan Additional District Judge II /Azafi Zila Qazi Buner at Daggar Buner. Appeal.No.20/13 Institution 14/2/2024. Date of hearing. 23/12/2024. Ajmal Khan VS Sikhawat Shah etc. Notice to no.8.Islam Shah s/o Shanroz Khan. 9.Mohmad Rehman s/o Khamdullah resident Bajkatta Buner.10.Saeed Rawan.12.Naseeb Rawan .13.Naseeb Zada sons of Shahgi resident of Martong district Shangla at Bajkatta Buner. 15.Bakhtmand s/o Hakem Khanresident of Bar Teraj Chaghorzal Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through duly authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.30 am dated 23/12/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex- parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.





In brief

Rozner overtakes McIlroy and Hatton

DUBAI (AFP): Antoine Rozner hit a flawless seven-under-par 65 to overtake Rory McIlroy and Tyrrell Hatton on top of the leaderboard after the second round of the World Tour Championship in Dubai on Friday. The 31-year-old Frenchman finished with four straight birdies, for a total of seven, and had no bogeys as he took a one-shot lead on McIlroy and Hatton, who both hit 69. Northern Ireland's McIlroy, bidding to equal Seve Ballesteros' mark of six European Tour Order of Merit crowns, and England's Hatton had lead overnight in the season-ending tournament. "It's one of those days where everything goes in and I had a ton of fun out there," said world number 154 Rozner, who carded 70 in the first round. "I just think the confidence clicked and everything is going the right way." With 2,000 points on offer to the winner, McIlroy only needs a top ten finish to secure a sixth Race to Dubai crown of his career, matching Ballesteros. McIlroy made a fast start with three birdies in his first four holes. Another followed at the seventh as he climbed to nine under, only to bogey the eighth and tenth to gift the lead to Rozner. McIlroy parred his way to the par-five last, where he produced a stellar second shot inside 15 feet and brushed the left edge of the cup with the eagle putt which would have seen him rejoin the lead. Hatton had to grind his way into contention after bogeying the fourth, hitting back with a birdie putt at the sixth before adding another at the eighth. The World Number 18 holed from eight feet at the tenth to pick up a shot and when he holed a clutch putt from eight feet for birdie at the 15th, he was one adrift of Rozner. Chile's Joaquin Niemann carded an eagle, five birdies and two bogeys in his 67 to sit at seven under in sole fourth.

Tim Southee announced retirement

WELLINGTON (Agencies): Former New Zealand captain Tim Southee on Friday announced that he will retire from Test cricket after the upcoming Test series against England, with the 35-year-old set to finish up at his home ground in Hamilton. The irrepressible seam bowler made his debut against England at Napier in 2008 and has been a mainstay of New Zealand Test side since then. Southee has taken 385 wickets in 104 Tests during his 16-year-long career. He is the second-highest wicket-taker for New Zealand in Test cricket with Richard Hadlee standing at the top with 431 wickets. "Representing New Zealand was all I ever dreamed of growing up," Tim Southee said in his retirement announcement. "To play for the Black Caps for 18 years has been the greatest honour and privilege, but the time feels right to now step away from the game that has given so much to me." "Test cricket holds a special place in my heart, so to be able to play such a big series against the same opponent my Test career began against all those years ago, and on three grounds that are incredibly special to me, seems the perfect way to end my time in the Black Cap. "I'll always be so grateful to my family, friends, coaches, our fans and everyone involved in the game who has supported me and my career over the years. "It's been an amazing ride and I wouldn't change a thing."

ICC 'seeks written reasons from India' for refusing to tour Pakistan

DUBAI (Web Desk): The International Cricket Council (ICC) has officially demanded a written explanation from the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) over its decision to refuse a tour of Pakistan for the Champions Trophy 2025. The development follows the BCCI verbally informing the ICC of its decision not to travel to Pakistan for the mega-event, after which the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) requested the ICC to provide a copy of India's written response in this regard, the sources added. They said that, as per the rules, the Indian board would have to provide solid grounds for not playing the tournament in the country. "In case of receiving a written reply, Pakistan

may seek substantial evidence supporting the reasons," they said, adding that the ICC would then have to take a final decision about India after reviewing those reasons. Scheduling of the Champions Trophy, one of the most important cricketing events after the World Cup, hit a snag after India refused to play the Champions Trophy 2025 in Pakistan. According to sources, the ICC last week informed the PCB that India would not tour Pakistan for the eight-team tournament. Pakistan has rejected the option of a hybrid arrangement that would allow India to play their matches at neutral venues, such as in the United Arab Emirates. Meanwhile, the PCB wrote to the sport's govern-

ing body seeking an explanation for India's refusal to send a team to the country for the mega cricket event. Sources privy to the development said that if the Indian cricket body failed to provide proper reasons, then the Indian team would be asked to participate in the cricketing event in Pakistan. If, for any reason, India refuses to play in Pakistan without valid reasons, another team may replace them in the Champions Trophy, they added. As the ICC earns from the trophy's broadcast rights, advertisements, and sponsorships, India's non-participation may deal it a financial blow of \$500 million, while the Indian board is estimated to lose \$100 million in revenues, according to the sources.

Alcaraz near ATP Finals exit after losing to Zverev

Turin (Agencies): Carlos Alcaraz is on the verge of exiting the 2024 ATP Finals following a straight-set defeat by Alexander Zverev in Turin. Second seed Zverev secured top spot in the group with a 7-6 (7-5) 6-4 win and will face American Taylor Fritz in the semi-finals. Alcaraz, who only won one of his three group matches, must await the result of tonight's match between Andrey Rublev and Casper Ruud. He will be out if Norway's Ruud takes a single set against the winless Russian. Zverev, 27, who also won his opening two matches against Rublev and Ruud in straight sets, has not had his serve broken so far at the season-ending tournament – but he played it down when asked whether he is currently playing the best tennis of his life. "You guys have got to relax a little bit," he said after beating 21-year-old Alcaraz. "Three fantastic matches, now the semi-finals will be very difficult. Taylor [Fritz] has beaten me a few times at the slams. "Alcaraz has beaten me too many times this year so I'm glad to get this one. We have a great rivalry and friendship, I'm always glad to play him – unless he wins." Zverev continued his impressive form against Alcaraz, who has struggled with a chest complaint dur-



ing this tournament and once again wore a pink nasal strip to aid his breathing. Seemingly still feeling the effects of that illness, Alcaraz was again off form but showed some fighting spirit to save seven break points in the first set, then two set points – before Zverev superbly converted the third. Zverev had four of those break points saved in the fourth game of the match, then had set point on Alcaraz's serve when leading 6-5, but hit a cross-court forehand long following an extensive rally. The Spaniard forced the tie-break but Zverev was once again able to get his nose in front. After both produced superb shots during the tie-break – including a terrific cross-court lob from Alcaraz – Zverev managed the best to finally secure the set. His third set point saw the German dig out an attempted Alcaraz winner

with a brilliant half-volleyed pick-up near the net. Alcaraz spooned the returning volley wide and Zverev roared in celebration. Zverev only needed to win that first set to guarantee his spot in the last four but he was determined to secure the win to get the top spot in the John Newcombe Group. The break in the second set was easier to come by, as Alcaraz fired a straightforward volley into the net to give up the immediate advantage. Wimbledon and French Open champion Alcaraz was clearly unhappy, the third seed loudly complaining to his team after falling 3-1 behind in the second set. He psyched himself up enough to force two break points against Zverev at 3-2 – the first the German had faced in the entire tournament – but was unable to convert before Zverev saw out the match.

Japan hammer Indonesia to edge closer to WC spot

JAKARTA (AFP): Japan hammered a hapless Indonesia side 4-0 on Friday, extending their lead at the top of qualifying for the 2026 World Cup and edging them closer to an eighth consecutive spot at football's premier spectacle. Despite several early scares in front of more than 70,000 fans in Jakarta, the Blue Samurai eventually carved open a home team filled with Europe-born players before teaching them a footballing lesson. Japan coach Hajime Moriyasu said he was glad for the latest win but would not be satisfied until they qualified. "I am happy that we are top of the group but we haven't gained anything yet until we manage to secure the World Cup place," he said of the team's seven-point gap at the top of Asian Group C. "We just have to keep on winning. I set a very high goal to become world champions, but before this we have to play each game one-by-one, step-by-step. So I would just like to focus on the next game." Japan remain unbeaten in the third round of qualifying at the halfway stage after four wins and a draw, all but guaranteeing them a World Cup berth bar an astonishing collapse. Crystal Palace's Daichi Kamada cut past a defender in the 35th minute and squared the ball across



goal, with Indonesia's Justin Hubner being credited with an own goal as he tried to stop striker Koki Ogawa from tapping in. That broke more than half an hour of stubborn Indonesian resistance in heavy rain before Japan took their foot off the brakes, doubling their lead just five minutes later when Monaco's Takumi Minamino smashed in a low shot off the left upright. Sporting Lisbon's Hidemasa Morita capitalised on a mistake by Indonesian goalkeeper Maarten Paes before substitute Yukinari Sugawara smashed in a fourth to seal the thumping. Japan will go away to China on Tuesday knowing that another win would almost cement their World Cup place, while Indonesia face Saudi Arabia, who are fighting for second joint on six points with Australia and China. Just the top two seal their place at the 2026 World Cup in North

America, with third and fourth forced into another round of Asian qualifying. Defeat consigned Indonesia to the bottom spot in the group of six, and three points off a coveted top-four spot. It was the hosts who missed the most glaring chances in the first half. The best came when striker Ragnar Oratmangoen was put through on goal in the ninth minute, but he delayed his strike and fired it straight at Japan's goalkeeper, Zion Suzuki. The misses proved costly as Japan showed their class, cruising to an easy win in the second half as Indonesia tried in vain to nick a consolation goal. Indonesia's South Korean coach Shin Tae-yong rued those scuppered chances but said he was still hopeful about his team's future. "I'm still looking forward. I still hope that we will finish third or fourth place in our table," he said.



JOHANNESBURG: Lutho Sipamla dismissed Abhishek Sharma for 36, South Africa vs India, 4th T20I.

World Junior Tennis C'ships finals on Saturday

ISLAMABAD (APP): The finals of the ITF Pakistan J30 Ali Embroidery World Junior Tennis Championships 2024 will be played here at the Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF) Tennis Complex on Saturday. The event has brought together 47 junior players from around the globe, including 28 boys and 19 girls representing countries such as Hong Kong, Japan, China, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Canada, Korea, Germany, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Maldives, and Singapore. Additionally, 28 Pakistani players (22 boys and 6 girls).

The finals of Girls Singles, Boys Doubles and Boys Singles will be played on Saturday. In Boys semi finals played Friday, Sion Ji of Korea beat Nadir Mirza of Pakistan 6-4, 3-6,7-5 while Xiuyuan Guo of China defeated Muhammad Talha Khan of Pakistan 6-2, 6-4. In Girls' semi finals, Dianara Di Silava of Sri Lanka beat So Yuna of Korea 6-3,6-4 while Karolina Ligai of Kazakhsatn defeated A Hyun Jo of Korea 7-5,6-1. In Girls Doubles final, Yeonn Joo Cha (KOR), So Yuna (KOR) beat Haruhi Katsube (JPN), Hinata Wada (JPB) and won the girls doubles titles 1-6,7-(6)-10(4).

SAAF Cross Country Athletics C'ship postponed

ISLAMABAD (APP): Severe weather conditions have compelled the Athletics Federation of Pakistan (AFP) to postpone the SAAF Cross Country Athletics Championship for a couple of months. Originally, the event was scheduled to be held in Islamabad from 24 in Islamabad. According to a statement issued here, the Secretary General Col. (R) Shah Jahan Mir said, the decision was made in consultation with the South Asia Athletics Federation, prioritizing the safety and well-being of participating athletes. He said the Central Punjab has been experiencing hazardous conditions due to abnormal smog, prompting concerns about athletes' health. Unfavorable conditions pose a risk to athletes' health and performance. The government has implemented strict measures, including closures of educational institutions and restricted business hours in this regard, he said. Mir said the airspace and road closures will impact participating teams' travel from Lahore to Islamabad. Two of the teams participating in the championship had to travel by road from Lahore to Islamabad, he said and added that the new date for the championship will be announced shortly. Two men's categories events will be held in the championship, including men's senior and under-20. As many as seven countries will participate the mega event, including hosts Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Maldives, Nepal and Bhutan. It will be for the first time in the country's history, that Pakistan will host the Cross Country Athletics Championship.

Afghanistan win despite Usman century, Ahmed five-fer

DUBAI (Monitoring Desk): Usman Khan's century went in vain as Pakistan U19 fell 100 runs short against Afghanistan U19 chasing 307-run target in the second match of the U19 tri-series here at the ICC Academy in Dubai on Friday. Earlier, Afghanistan's Faisal Shinozada struck a century (123, 113b, 6x4s, 7x6s) and put on am 113-run second-wicket partnership with Mahboob Khan (54, 84b, 5x4s) as they posted 306-8 in the allotted 50 overs. Left-arm pacer

Mohammad Ahmed picked up five wickets including that of centurion Faisal to return figures of 10-0-53-5. In turn, opening batter Usman Khan stayed on the crease of 133 balls hitting eight fours to score 102 runs, while wickets fell on the other end. Naseer Khan Maroofkhil was the pick of the bowlers for Afghanistan as Pakistan were bowled out for 206 in 46.3 overs. Pakistan will now face Afghanistan in the fourth match of the tournament scheduled on Wednesday, 20 November. The first ball

of the match will be bowled at 10.30am PKT. Scores in brief: Afghanistan U19 beat Pakistan U19 by 100 runs. Afghanistan U19 306-8, 50 overs (Faizal Shinozada 123, Mahboob Khan 54, Barkat Ibrahimzai 36, Nazifullah Amiri 31; Mohammad Ahmed 5-53). Pakistan U19 206 all out, 46.3 overs (Usman Khan 102, Saad Baig 36; Naseer Khan Maroofkhil 4-22, Uzairullah 2-27, Allah Mohammad Ghazanfar 2-38, Nooristani Omarzai 2-41).

40 arrests at tense France-Israel football match



PARIS (AFP): Police made 40 arrests at a tense football match between France and Israel in Paris but the city's police chief said on Friday the huge security operation had "worked very well". The Nations League game at the Stade de France on Thursday took place under intense security after fans of Israeli club Maccabi Tel Aviv were attacked in Amsterdam last week. Around 4,000 police and members of the French security forces patrolled inside and outside the stadium, assisted by 1,600 civilian security personnel. Stewards had to intervene at one point to stop fans of both nations from clashing in the stands, an

AFP reporter saw. Videos posted on the X social media platform showed fans, some with Israeli flags, running along the rows of seats at the stadium while other supporters whistled and booed before members of the security team separated them. "A fight broke out which was immediately contained by the stewards," Paris police chief Laurent Nunez told France 2 television. "The match went very well from a security point of view." A security source said one person was arrested immediately after the incident and another was detained after being identified from CCTV images. Just 16,611 people

watched the game in the 80,000-capacity stadium, the lowest attendance for a match involving the French men's national team since the stadium was built in the late 1990s. The match ended in a goalless draw but the point earned was enough for France to qualify for the quarter-finals of the Nations League. In Amsterdam last week, Maccabi fans were pursued by youths on scooters and beaten after a Europa League match against Ajax. The Israeli supporters had earlier burned a Palestinian flag, attacked a taxi and chanted anti-Arab slogans, according to city authorities. Amsterdam's mayor Femke Halsema called the incidents a "poisonous cocktail of anti-Semitism and hooliganism" while Dutch far-right lawmaker Geert Wilders blamed the violence on "Muslims". The incidents in the Netherlands took place with anti-Israeli sentiment and reported anti-Semitic acts across the world rising sharply as Israel wages wars against Iran-backed Islamist in Lebanon and Gaza.

Saira, Sidra hit match-winning half-centuries

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Saira Jabeen hit a gritty half-century to help Conquerors beat Challengers by five wickets at the HPC Oval Ground, Karachi on Friday in the fourth round of the National Women's One-Day Tournament. At UBL Sports Complex Stars cruised to a seven-wicket win over Strikers as Sidra Amin struck an unbeaten half-century. Aliya Riaz's 82-ball 75, laced with eight fours and two sixes helped Challengers post 201 all out in 46 overs after opting to bat first. Nashra Sundhu and Dua Majid bagged three wicket hauls. In reply, Saira kept the Conquerors' innings intact, after walking into bat at 2-1, hitting six fours in her 71 off 118 balls. Fatima Sana, batting at No. 4, contributed 33 off 35 balls including three fours. Syeda Aroob Shah hit two sixes and a four in her 23 not out off 14 balls while also partnering with



Najiha Alvi (15 not out, 18b) for an unbeaten 30-run sixth-wicket partnership as Conquerors chased the target with 19 balls to spare. In the other match of this round, after opting to field first, Stars bundled out Strikers for 108 in 41.5 overs. Rameen Shamim picked up three wickets while Waheeda Akhtar and Tuba Hassan dismissed two batters each. In turn, Player of the match, Sidra struck an unbeaten 79 off 64 balls including 13 fours, to take her team over the line in 22.5 overs. Sidra also partnered with Kaynat Hafeez for an 86-run third-wicket partnership after Anam Amin struck two early blows reducing Stars to 5-2. The next round matches

of the tournament will be played on Monday, 18 November. Scores in brief: 7th Match - Conquerors beat Challengers by five wickets at the HPC Oval Ground, Karachi. Challengers 201 all out, 46 overs (Aliya Riaz 75, Gull Rukh 31, Fatima Shahid 22; Dua Majid 3-15, Nashra Sundhu 3-40). Conquerors 202-5, 46.5 overs (Saira Jabeen 71, Fatima Sana 33, Syeda Aroob Shah 23 not out, Khadija Chishti 21, Hafsa Khalid 20, Najiha Alvi 15 not out; Umm-e-Hani 2-28). Player of the match – Saira Jabeen (Conquerors). 8th Match – Stars beat Strikers by seven wickets at the UBL Sports Complex. Strikers 108 all out, 41.5 overs (Nida Dar 25; Rameen Shamim 3-9, Waheeda Akhtar 2-10, Tuba Hassan 2-37). Stars 109-3, 22.5 overs (Sidra Amin 79 not out; Anam Amin 2-13). Player of the match – Sidra Amin (Stars).

**In brief****Drug dealer sentenced to 9 years imprisonment**

RAWALPINDI (APP): A local court has sentenced a criminal Abdullah to nine years imprisonment along with a fine of Rs 80,000. According to a Rawalpindi Police spokesman, a case was registered against the accused by the Saddar Beroni Police on the recovery of 1.6 kilograms of hashish. Meanwhile, the Taxila Police arrested the main accused Amjad involved in the killing of Ijaz and injuring others including women. Six of his accomplices had already been held.

IRSA releases 108,300 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 108,300 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 54,200 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1512.01 feet and was 114.01 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 26,600 cusecs and 55,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1171.30 feet, which was 121.30 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 6,300 cusecs and 32,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 56,900, 51,200, 38,500 and 5,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 12,600 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 3,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

School students visits AIOU

ISLAMABAD (APP): A group of students of an Islamabad-based school, Saint Gabriel school, visited Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) on Friday. The students visited Print Production Unit, Radio and Television Studios, Central Library, Students' facilitation center and call center of the University. Incharge Printing Press, Dr. Sarmad Iqbal briefed the students regarding the processes of designing, pasting, plating, and printing. Dr. Sarmad Iqbal informed the students that this is the largest printing press among Asian universities, producing 2 million books each semester. He further elaborated that these machines were imported from Japan, Germany, the UK, and China. During their visit to the Call Center and facilitation center, the students were briefed on the services provided to students of the University across the country. They were informed that the call center handles 1,500 calls daily, providing the required information to students. Meanwhile, a larger number of students visit the facilitation center daily to resolve their issues under one roof. Later, the students toured the library and radio/TV studios. They showed great interest in the Iqbal Gallery within the library and asked numerous questions, which were satisfactorily answered by the senior cataloger, Muhammad Ishaq. The students' faces lit up with joy upon seeing the University's radio/TV studios. They expressed surprise, saying they had never imagined that an educational institution could have such advanced facilities. Sharing their impressions of the visit, the students remarked that they felt as if they were in a university of a developed country, given the exceptional educational facilities, administrative arrangements, and overall environment.



ISLAMABAD: A female fire-eater wows the crowd with blazing flames during ten days "Folk Festival Lok Mela" at Lok Virsa in the Federal Capital. —APP Photo

Journalism plays vital role in democratic societies

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP), Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan on Friday said that journalism played a very important role in democratic societies and parliamentary reporters were doing excellent coverage of the Parliament.

Talking to a delegation of the Parliamentary Reporters Association (PRA) here at his office, Mashhood reiterated the importance of youth in nation-building and assured the PRA representatives that the government, through the Youth Programme, remains com-

mitted to supporting the young people of Pakistan in every possible way.

He said that persons associated with the media industry could also avail the facility of modern training courses started by PMYP.

Mashhood said that journalists have an important responsibility regarding the supremacy of the Constitution and the stability of democracy.

The PRA representatives on the occasion praised Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan for his tireless efforts in the realm of youth empowerment and development.

The representatives acknowledged that Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan was widely regarded as one of the best choices for championing youth causes, noting his deep commitment to providing opportunities for young Pakistanis and creating a pathway for their success.

The PRA also highlighted his strategic initiatives aimed at fostering skill development, educational opportunities, and overall growth for the nation's youth. President PRA Usman Khan, Secretary General Naveed Akbar and others were present.

Rubina emphasizes transparency in funds transfer

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Senator Rubina Khalid Friday emphasized the need to ensure transparency and dignity in transferring funds to deserving women.

She was speaking during a meeting with the Karandaaz Pakistan's Chief Digital Officer, Sharjeel Murtaza and Associate Director, Usman Kokab. Secretary Amer Ali Ahmad was also present during the meeting.

The meeting focused on key topics, including the implementation of the RAAST payment system to facilitate payments to BISP beneficiaries, biometric verification of women for enhanced security, and skill training programs aimed at providing employment opportunities to deserving families.

Speaking on the occasion, Rubina Khalid said that bilateral talks between the State Bank of Pakistan and the BISP are scheduled in the coming days to enhance transparency in the distribution of funds and to digitalize payments for beneficiary women.

She highlighted that biometric verification is essential to strengthen the payment system and prevent unauthorized access to beneficiaries' funds. Secretary Amer Ali Ahmad suggested utilizing the services of BISP's existing partner banks to pilot the implementation of the RAAST payment system.

Police arrest six gamblers

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi district police arrested six gamblers and recovered Rs 25,500 stake money, five mobile phones and other items from their possession, said a police spokesman here on Friday.

He informed that Waris Khan police conducted a raid and arrested six gamblers namely Saleem, Muzaffar, Asif, Qayyum, Tanveer and Azhar, who were allegedly involved in betting while playing cards. Police recovered Rs 25,500, five mobile phones, and other items from their possession.

A case has been registered against the accused while further investigation is under process. Superintendent of Police, Rawal, Muhammad Haseeb Raja said that gambling is the root cause of other evils and those involved in such crimes do not deserve any concession.

Mohsin Naqvi extends warm wishes to Sikh community

ISLAMABAD (APP): Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has extended heartfelt congratulations to the Sikh community on the occasion of Baba Guru Nanak Dev's birth anniversary on Friday.

In his statement, he highlighted Baba Guru Nanak's enduring legacy, emphasizing his teachings of love for humanity, equality, and compassion, which continue to inspire millions worldwide.

"Baba Guru Nanak promoted the values of humanity, equality, and empathy, which remain relevant to this day," stated Naqvi.

He further praised the Sikh spiritual leader as a symbol of religious tolerance and interfaith harmony, urging people to embody these principles to foster unity and peace.

The minister warmly welcomed Sikh pilgrims from across the globe who have travelled to Pakistan to participate in the celebra-

tions. "We are delighted to host pilgrims from various countries for these sacred festivities," he remarked.

Naqvi also acknowledged the significance of Kartarpur Sahib, one of the holiest sites in Sikhism, located in Pakistan, as a beacon of interfaith harmony.

To facilitate the Sikh diaspora, the government has introduced an online free visa service for passport holders from the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada.

"This initiative demonstrates our commitment to ensuring ease and accessibility for the Sikh community," Naqvi explained.

The minister assured that efforts are ongoing to further improve facilities for the Sikh community.

He also announced the allocation of a special quota for Sikh fans in the upcoming ICC Champions Trophy tournament, set to be hosted by Pakistan.

"The Sikh community is

an integral part of our diverse society, and we are eager to extend our hospitality during both religious and cultural events," he added.

In his remarks, Naqvi reiterated the government's commitment to protecting the rights of all minorities in Pakistan.

"Providing equal opportunities and safeguarding the rights of minorities is not just a responsibility; it is our moral and constitutional obligation," he affirmed.

The celebrations of Baba Guru Nanak's birth anniversary have drawn thousands of Sikh pilgrims, who have expressed appreciation for the hospitality and arrangements made by the Pakistani government.

With comprehensive facilities provided for their religious rituals, the event stands as a testament to Pakistan's dedication to promoting interfaith harmony and respect for all religious communities.

Fee hikes by private medical colleges unacceptable: Irfan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) senior leader Senator Irfan Siddiqui Friday said that private medical colleges will not be allowed to arbitrarily increase fees and violate rules.

"Senate Standing Committee on National Health is seriously looking into this issue," Siddiqui said during a meeting with a delegation of parents and students from Islamabad's medical colleges who met him in his office.

A formal notification has been issued for a three-member sub-committee, headed by Senator Palwasha Khan, which will begin its work next week, he said.

The parents and students informed Senator Siddiqui about the issues they are facing, revealing that the colleges have unilaterally increased fees, which are now many times higher than last year.

They also mentioned that the private colleges are openly violating the PMDC's (Pakistan Medical and Dental Council) guidelines.

Senator Siddiqui assured

the delegation that after the sub-committee's report, legal action would be taken against institutions violating PMDC's guidelines and arbitrarily increasing fees.

He added that the government is also aware of this issue and will soon take appropriate action.

The delegation thanked Senator Ameer Chishti, the chairman of the National Health Committee, and other members for their efforts in addressing this important issue and trying to protect students from exploitation.

ANF recovers 299 kg drugs in 10 operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force while conducting 10 operations across the country managed to recover over 299 kg drugs worth Rs 20 million and arrested 10 accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Friday.

He informed that in two operations conducted near two different universities in Jamshoro, 6 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of two suspects.

1.5 kg hashish was recovered from an accused arrested near a college in Muslim Town Faisalabad.

In another operation, 180 grams hashish was recovered from a drug dealer

rounded up near a famous university in Islamabad.

The arrested accused confessed to selling drugs to the students of educational institutions.

The spokesman said that in an operation, 120 heroin-filled capsules were recovered from the stomach of a passenger going to Sharjah at Peshawar International Airport.

At Lahore International Airport, 18 hashish-filled capsules were recovered from the stomach of another passenger going to Thailand.

285 kg hashish was recovered from secret cavities of a truck intercepted near Shikarpur Sukkur and

an accused was arrested during the operation.

1.2 kg opium and 2.4 kg hashish were recovered from the possession of a drug dealer netted near Hatian Road, Attock.

During another operation in Attock, 1,250 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of the accused.

1 kg hashish was recovered from a drug peddler arrested near a bus stop in Peshawar.

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

Pakistan's cities unite with diverse traditional cuisine

ISLAMABAD (APP): The ongoing 10-day Lok Mela festival has brought together people from all walks of life and cities, showcasing Pakistan's vibrant cultural heritage and tantalizing traditional cuisine where visitors are flocking to indulge in mouth-watering delicacies like Balochi Sajji, Sarson ka Saag, Chapli Kabab, Sindhi Biryani and Chapal Kabab.

A report aired by PTV News channel stated that Pakistan's cities have come together to celebrate the country's rich culinary diversity at the 10-day Lok Mela festival. The festival, which kicked off in Islamabad, features a wide

range of traditional cuisine from across Pakistan, showcasing the unique flavors and cooking techniques of each city.

From the spicy karhai of Peshawar to the flavorful biryani of Karachi and from the savory sarson ka saag of Lahore to the mouthwatering Balochi Sajji, the festival offers a culinary journey through Pakistan's diverse cities, said a visitor while enjoying food.

The report highlighted that the festival aims to promote cultural unity and exchange among Pakistan's cities providing a platform for artisans, chefs, and musicians to showcase their talents.

With thousands of visitors attending the festival daily, Lok Mela has become a symbol of Pakistan's shared cultural heritage and traditions, said a youngsters' group. I am loving the variety of traditional dishes here and the flavors are amazing" a Islamabad resident added.

"I have never tasted such authentic Peshawari Kabab outside of Peshawar" said a student visited with his school friends. "Lok Mela has become a yearly tradition for me. The food, music and crafts everything is just fantastic" Maria Ahmed, a women came from Punjab said.

IESCO issues power shutdown programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Friday issued a power suspension programme for Saturday 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 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM, Islamabad Circle, Tramri, Lahtara Road, Rahara, Kundrajgaan, Chatta Bakhtawar, Bhara Kho. I&II, Athal, Shahpur, I-8/2&3, H-8, NPCC-I, Shifa International, ISI, Tamir, Pandori, Khanna East, Foreign Office, NTC, ETBP, G-5, Scheme II, Rest House, Hospital, CDA Flats, Pak Chahna, F-8, EOBI, Carriage Factory, Belarod, Peer Mehr Ali Shah, NIH, AQ Khan, Sunny Bank, Cecil, Nimble, Kotli Sattian, Peer Suhawah Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle, G-15/1, Pirwadhai, Murree Bruri, MES, Dhok Farman Ali, Madina Colony, Lakho Road, Kayani Road, Khanna-II, E-Block, Kurry Road, Jinnah Camp, Airport, Farooq Azam, Gulzar Quaid, 4th Road, Tamsamaabad, Arya Mohalla, Major Masood, Sarafa Bazar, Jinnah Road, Pirwadhai,

Amin Town, Eidgah, Kayani Road, Medina Colony, Captain Amir Shaheed, G-15/1, Lakho Road, Mohanpura Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Mehboob Shaheed, Park View, Pindi Board, Jail Park, Fuji Foundation, Morgah, Car Chowk, Mohra Nagyal, Shahpur, Adiala, Dhok Noor, Zaraj-I & II, Zeta-I, IST, Dhok Awan, Mohra Nagyal, Major Riaz, Lala Zar, Jhawara, Shah Jeevan, Quaid-e-Azam Colony, Dhamiyal-I, Lalkarti, UC Lakhana, Gulshan Saeed, Cantt, Qasim Base, Mal Road, Dhok Farman Ali, Jail Park, Kot Jabi, PAF, FECHS, RCCI Express, Murree Burori, MES, Morgah, Major Riaz, Kalyal, Ranyal, Quaid-e-Azam Colony, Chongli No-22, Rajar, Japan Road, Kahota City-II, Kallar City, Ghazian Khan, Sagari, Mandra, Kaliam, Bengali, Nishan Hyder Feeders, Attock Circle, Taxila, HMC Road, Jalala, Mushtaq Hussain, Nawaz Shaheed, Sher Shah Suri, Wahadat Colony, Kohsar Colony, Shahia, Rashid Minhas, AWC Housing, Munirabad, Hussainabad, Burhan, Gulshan Sehat, (E-18), D-18, D-17, Hameed, Mansar, Kashmir Rural, Ghorghashti, Fowara Chowk, Shadi Khan, Sarka, Air University, Neeka Kalan, Muslim

Town, Azeem Shaheed, Bahtar, Pind Sultani, Gali, Dharnal, Fateh Jang, Laniwala, Amanpur, Jhang Feeders, Jhelum Circle, F-7 Kachhari, Langarpur, Bolani, Sarai Alamgir, Mohalla Shaheedan, F-8 Civil Line, Pakhwal, Mangala Cantt, Gadari, Hasnot, Khai Kalia, Colonel Mohammad Akram, Gujjar Khan, Scheme.I, Main Bazar, Suhawah Kachhari, Chhapar Sharif, Baba Shaheed, Shah Safir, Kursal, Kangar Thatti, Islampura Feeders, Chakwal Circle, Sarpak, Tharpal, Millat Chowk, Mureed, Khairpur, Islamia Chowk, Daulatala, Dhadyal Rural, Dhoda, Sarkal, Bisharat, Rawal, Katas, Jalalpur, Pipli, Dharnal, Sukhu, Tallagung City, Akwal, Bilalabad, Daroot, Mayal, Wanhar Feeders, GSO Circle, From 07:00 AM to 06:00 PM, 132KV Dhadi-Gulpur transmission line 30 to 40 megawatts load management can be done if required. From 09:00 AM to 04:00 PM, Foreign Office, NTC, ETBP, G-5, Pandorian, Shahzad Town, Scheme 2, Pak Chahna Centre, Rest House, Hospital, CDA, G-6, ISI, Jail Park, Kot Jabi, PAF, 502 Workshop, Gulzar Quaid, Murree Brewery, MES, Tamasmabad Feeders and surrounding areas.

Turkey detains 49 Afghan migrants
ISTANBUL KABUL (amu.tv): Turkish authorities have detained 49 Afghan migrants, including 13 children, during a coastal operation in Çanakkale Province, the Anadolu news agency reported. The Turkish Coast Guard intercepted the undocumented migrants in the Ayvacik region as they attempted to leave Turkey through unauthorized means. Following legal processing by the Coast Guard Command, the migrants were transferred to a repatriation center.

Salang Pass reopens after closure due to snowstorm
KABUL (amu.tv): The Salang Pass, a vital section of the Kabul-Balkh Highway, reopened early Friday after a temporary closure caused by heavy snowfall, severe storms, and poor visibility, the Taliban-run Ministry of Public Works announced. The ministry said that snow-clearing operations allowed the critical mountain pass to reopen, restoring traffic flow between Kabul and nine northern provinces.

Asia is comparable to a living body composed of soil and water. The heart that beats inside the body is Afghanistan. The destruction of Afghanistan would be the destruction of Asia. And in its progress and prosperity lies the well-being of Asia. - Allama Iqbal

Washington: Recognition of 'Taliban' depends on women's participation

KABUL (TOLONews): Vedant Patel, Deputy Spokesperson for the US Department of State, has once again stated that recognition of Afghanistan's interim government is contingent upon women's participation in society. In a press briefing, Patel said that as long as the interim government of Afghanistan continues to exclude half of the country's population from social participation, it cannot achieve its goal of being internationally recognized. The Deputy Spokesperson for the US Department of State said: "As long as the Taliban continues to essentially hold back 50 percent of its population from fully integrating in society, fully



participating in society, it certainly is not going to be able to reach the international recognition that we know that they – that they're seeking." The Islamic Emirate has not yet commented on the matter. However, it has consistently emphasized that women's rights in Afghanistan are upheld within the framework of

Islamic laws, and other countries should not interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. Salim Paigir, a political analyst, said: "Although the countries that constantly talk about schools, universities, and women's rights may not fully practice these values themselves, it is the responsibility of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan to reopen schools and universities and provide work opportunities for women so that we can avoid the excuses made by the international community against us." Previously, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs in a program held in Kabul expressed hope that the new US administration would reconsider its current policies toward Afghanistan.



Jalali travels to Saudi Arabia

KABUL (TOLONews): Noor Jalal Jalali, the acting Minister of Public Health, has traveled to Saudi Arabia to attend a conference titled "Resistance Against Antimicrobial Drugs." The Ministry of Public Health stated that the conference will focus on reducing resistance to antimicrobial drugs, ensuring their proper use, and finding joint solutions to combat this challenge. Sharafat Zaman Amarkhil, the ministry's spokesperson, said: "The purpose of this trip is to participate in the ministers' meeting on resistance to antimicrobial drugs in Jeddah. The conference will discuss ways to reduce the level of resistance to antimicrobial drugs. Additionally, there will be discussions on mitigating the declining effectiveness of antibiotics." Meanwhile, some doctors in Afghanistan consider the participation of public health officials in such conferences beneficial. Baz Mohammad Shir Baz, a physician, said: "This conference is seen as a critical step in uniting international efforts to combat resistant microbes, boosting patients' immune systems, and promoting sustainable health practices worldwide." Previously, the Acting Minister of Public Health of the Islamic Emirate had visited Switzerland, where he met with the Director-General of the World Health Organization to discuss controlling infectious diseases, eradicating polio, and standardizing healthcare services in Afghanistan.

Nazari: Modern sciences in country require special attention

KABUL (TOLONews): Abdul Latif Nazari, the Deputy Minister of Economy, during a program titled "Ministry of Education Science Stars" in Kabul, said that modern sciences in the country require special attention. The Deputy Minister emphasized the importance of higher education in Afghanistan and added that despite some sanctions, the caretaker government has made significant progress in various areas, including combating narcotics and corruption. Nazari said: "Despite being under sanctions, with our national assets frozen and banking restrictions, we have managed to maintain the stability of our national currency, control prices for the people, expand exports, eliminate financial and administrative corruption, and eradicate narcotics. We are a model



government in the region." The Cultural Attaché of the Iranian Embassy in Kabul also participated in the program and highlighted the importance of coordination and cooperation between neighboring and Muslim countries in cultural and educational sectors. Seyed Rouhollah Hosseini, the Cultural Attaché of the Iranian Embassy, stated: "We must move towards a unified community. Our God is one, our Prophet is one, our Book is one, and our Qibla

is one. While there are some differences, they are not grounds for conflict." Meanwhile, the head of Turkey's Coordination and Cooperation Institution also spoke about Turkey's cooperation with Afghanistan in various fields, particularly education. Fazil Akin Erdogan, head of Turkey's Coordination and Cooperation Institution, stated: "We have completed many school reconstruction projects and worked on capacity building. This program was launched in coordination with the Science Center, and from it, three individuals will be selected as Science Stars." According to officials at the Ministry of Education, the Science Stars program is being held among students across the country, and out of 34 participants, three will be selected as Science Stars from public schools.

Foreign Policy piece calls for US, West to engage with Kabul

KABUL (TOLONews): A Foreign Policy opinion piece by Jens Vesterlund Mathiesen, Adam Weinstein, and Galina Mikkelsen says that the new US administration led by President-elect Donald Trump and the West will face renewed opportunities and challenges in their approach to Afghanistan. Referring to the discontinuation of the position of the US special representative for Afghanistan in October, and the closing of Afghan embassies in Europe, the piece says that Donald Trump will inherit nearly "deadlocked US relations" with the Islamic Emirate. The piece called for coordinated US-European diplomacy on Afghanistan and suggested that the West should accept the current reality of Afghanistan rather than hoping to fracture the "Taliban" from within. It also reads that the Islamic Emirate leadership prefers de facto engagement and displays of diplomatic respect to de jure legitimacy. "There's no shortage of engagement with the Taliban by non-

Western powers. Aaron Zelin of the Washington Institute has meticulously tracked all Taliban diplomatic meetings since August 2021, nearly 2,000 in their first three years in power, with meetings accelerating year on year," the article reads. The writers criticized the Western strategy of non-recognition, and questioned the US's and Europe's distancing from Afghanistan while regional countries benefit from their engagement with the country. The piece said that regional countries have achieved much from their engagement with Kabul. The abandonment of Afghanistan by the West would be a mistake, the writers said, who encouraged face-to-face interaction with the current Afghan authorities rather than engaging from a distance. "The United States and Europe could move beyond occasional engagement in Doha and sporadic meetings in Kabul to take a long-term approach by meeting with the Taliban and the Afghan people

Iranian delegates in Kabul discuss Afghan prisoners in Iran

KABUL (TOLONews): An Iranian delegation, led by Deputy Minister of Justice Askar Jalalian, met with acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi in Kabul and announced that the practical process of transferring Afghan prisoners to Afghanistan would begin. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in a statement, said that during the meeting, the two sides also discussed the situation of refugees and regional cooperation. The statement read: "Amir Khan Muttaqi, the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Emirate, met and held discussions today with Askar Jalalian, the Deputy Minister of Justice of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and his accompanying delegation. During this meeting, bilateral relations, the situation of refugees and prisoners in Iran, economic and trade cooperation, and regional political cooperation were discussed." "If they talk about treat-



ing Afghan migrants with tolerance, it would at least provide Afghanistan with the opportunity to stabilize economically," said Abdul Jabar Akbari, a political affairs expert. The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation also reported on the delegation's meeting with its acting minister, adding that the discussions included establishing a

joint mechanism to prevent illegal migration. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court of the Islamic Emirate, in a statement, said that its officials asked the Iranian delegation to treat Afghan refugees and prisoners with leniency based on Islamic principles. "One of the most important strategies to prevent and reduce illegal migration

to neighboring countries, especially Iran, is granting work visas. This would enable economic migrants to follow legal pathways and avoid illegal migration," said Asifa Stanekzai, a migrant rights activist. Earlier, a human rights organization in Iran reported that 90 Afghan prisoners had been executed in Iran over the past three years.

USIP proposes solutions to address Afghanistan's economic crisis

KABUL (TOLONews): The United States Institute of Peace (USIP) in a report has highlighted the severe economic impact of reduced UN cash aid to Afghanistan, attributing it to the increasing demands of global crises. This reduction has left Afghanistan's fragile economy in a precarious state, the report said. According to USIP, Afghanistan's economy is heavily dependent on cash transactions, informal hawala systems, and the widespread use of the US dollar. "However, the country's banking system is in disarray, plagued by international sanctions and a lack of global trust," USIP stated. USIP said that Da Afghanistan Bank (DAB), the country's central bank, faces significant hurdles in implementing macroeconomic policies. "Restricted access to its foreign reserves and severe limitations on printing afghani



banknotes have further compounded these challenges," the report said. William Byrd, a specialist on Afghanistan at USIP, stressed the need for sound economic management to mitigate the economic fallout, saying: "Minimizing the potential economic damage will demand sound macroeconomic management by the Taliban regime. Among other measures, the country's economic policymakers will need to organize a gradual depreciation of the excessively strong exchange rate and ensure that there are adequate amounts of afghani currency notes in circulation." To address these challenges, USIP proposed several key solutions: Reducing reliance on the US dollar. Promoting the use of the afghani currency. Establishing digital payment systems. The institute also high-

lighted a sharp decline in humanitarian aid since 2022, which has significantly affected Afghanistan's economy. Aid fell from \$3.8 billion in 2022 to \$1.9 billion in 2023, with only \$1.2 billion provided so far in 2024, the report said. USIP further suggested that Afghanistan's frozen assets in Switzerland, including nearly \$400 million in investment income, could indirectly stabilize the afghani currency. The report emphasized that these funds could be utilized for macroeconomic stabilization without granting direct access to the interim government. The comprehensive analysis underscores the urgent need for coordinated measures to stabilize Afghanistan's economy amidst dwindling aid and persistent structural challenges.

Sar-e-Pol Farmers demand halt to Onion imports

SAR-E-POL (TOLONews): Farmers in Sar-e-Pol province are calling for a halt on onion imports from Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. These farmers are asking the Islamic Emirate to build standard cold storage facilities to increase domestic production and preserve onions. Mohammad Jamil, a farmer, said, "The price is 60 Afghani per seer of imported onions, which has disrupted our market. We can't even cover our costs despite significant investment in this land." "Traders are importing onions from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The officials of the Emirate should stop this so that onion prices rise. Both the farmers and the people are struggling with the current situation," said Noor Mohammad, a farmer. Meanwhile, some traders also view the fall in onion prices and the lack of a suitable market for this crop as harmful to farmers. "We sent around 40 seers of onions to Kabul and from Kabul it goes to Pakistan. But this year, the market in Pakistan is also down, benefiting neither the farmers nor the traders," said, Zaqoom

Khan, a trader. "Previously, sales were good; onions went to Pakistan, but this year Pakistan didn't buy much, and onions came in from Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, putting everyone at a loss," said Mohammad Sharif, a truck driver. However, the Sar-e-Pol Agriculture and Irrigation Directorate assures that standard cold storage facilities will be constructed in this province next year. "The proposal we submitted to the provincial authorities, ministry, and the leadership office has been approved. God will-

ing, in the coming years, we will build standard cold storage facilities," said Sharifullah Mosadiq, Head of the Agricultural Department of Sar-e-Pol's Agriculture and Irrigation Directorate. According to information from the Sar-e-Pol Agriculture and Irrigation Directorate, onions were planted on 850 hectares of land in this province last year, yielding 20,000 tons. This year, onions were planted on 900 hectares, expected to produce 30,150 tons, representing a 57% increase over last year's yield.

Doctors: Herbal medicines beneficial but can't remove cysts

KABUL (Pajhwok): Some social media users and herbal medicine sellers claim that using herbal teas can remove uterine and ovarian cysts. However, doctors say while medicinal plants are beneficial for treating some diseases, they cannot eliminate cysts. Health specialists say cysts are sacs filled with liquid, air, or semi-solid material that form within various tissues of the body. These structures can form in any part of the body, including the ovaries. Many cysts are painless and may resolve on their own, but others may require treatment and surgery. Posts on social media: A Facebook page titled "General Information," an article titled "Ginger's Benefits from a Herbal Medicine Perspective" claims that ginger is effective in treating uterine and ovarian cysts. Meanwhile, on the page "Pharmacy in the Kitchen, Women's Care," an article titled "Most Effective Medicinal Plants for Treating Ovarian Cysts" lists fennel, fenugreek, and the fruit of the chaste tree as effective for cysts. The source writes: "Fenugreek seeds are considered one of the most

important food and natural medicine sources in the world, and results have shown that they are one of the best natural remedies available for reducing the size and number of cysts, even completely eliminating them." On the Facebook page "Public Medical Laboratory Information," an article titled "Onion Skin and Its Magical Properties" has been published, which claims: "To treat uterine cysts, ovarian cysts, breast cysts, and irregular periods: Boil one large onion with its skin in two cups of water for 10 minutes and drink the water. After three months of this treatment, the cysts will disappear." Some social media users have also posted videos claiming that certain plants, such as lily, fenugreek, and others, are effective in eliminating cysts, especially in the uterus and ovaries. Some herbal medicine sellers and a herbal specialist also claim that medicinal plants are effective in treating cysts. Mohammad Rafiq Kazemi, a specialist in herbal medicine, told Pajhwok Afghan News that using some herbal remedies with honey could eliminate uterine and ovarian cysts. He says herbal teas made from pomegranate peel, saffron,

chamomile, and walnuts are effective in eliminating uterine and ovarian cysts. He also suggests that massaging the navel, soles of the feet, and the crown of the head with black cumin oil for one month is effective in treating cysts. He claims that he has treated many women with cysts in their uterus and ovaries. He added, "Even people who came to us with large cysts, which required surgery, were treated with remedies like onion tea... and they were cured." Meanwhile, Hakim Mohammadullah Sadat Chakari, the owner of the herbal medicine shop "Hakim Chakari" on Maiwand street of Kabul, said, "For eliminating cysts, especially ovarian and uterine cysts, herbal teas made from ingredients like mustard seed, fennel, cumin, ginger, cinnamon, purslane, and borage, along with honey, are effective, InshaAllah." Fact-Checking: Some Cyst Patients: "We tried herbal medicine for treatment, but it didn't work" Nafeesa (a pseudonym), a resident of Macro Rayan area in Kabul, says: "I had a cyst in my uterus. When the doctor diagnosed it and said I needed surgery, I was

scared of the surgery. My family took me to herbalists and I started treatment, but it didn't work, and my cyst kept growing larger to the point where it became dangerous. Eventually, I had to undergo surgery." When asked about herbal medicines she used, she said, "I don't remember all the names, but I was boiling fennel, fenugreek, five seeds, and ginger, and drinking it." Similarly, Mursal, a resident of Khair Khana area in Kabul, says: "Two years ago, I had an ovarian cyst, and I was always in pain. One of my friends advised me to brew ginger and cinnamon tea every night and drink it, but it didn't help. I went to a gynecologist, and the doctor gave me medicine, and I got better." Meanwhile, Madina, another resident of the city, says: "Two years ago, I had a cyst in my uterus. A neighbor told me to take Greek medicine. When I went to an herbalist, they gave me six kinds of Greek medicine. I took it on an empty stomach for three days, but it didn't work. I tried medicine from several herbalists, but nothing worked. Eventually, I had to have surgery and recovered." Doctors: Herbal plants do not

eliminate cysts Dr. Khadija Misbah, a specialist in obstetrics and gynecology in Kabul, says that lack of exercise, improper diet, not eating vegetables, fruits, and drinking enough water daily can lead to the formation of cysts in the uterus and ovaries. She also notes that hormonal treatments for fertility can also cause cysts to form. She explains that irregular periods, weight gain, hair growth on the face, arms, back, and chest are symptoms of this condition. According to Misbah, if a cyst is diagnosed at an early stage, it can be treated with medication. However, if it becomes larger, surgical intervention may be necessary. Regarding the claims made on social media about treating cysts with herbs or other methods, she says: "Using herbal teas to eliminate cysts is completely wrong. This is a hormonal issue, and herbal teas cannot stop it." She added, "Herbal medicines have their effectiveness; for example, fennel, ginger, and others are useful for bloating, but they cannot eliminate cysts." Also, Dr. Sonita Bahram, an obstetrics and gynecology specialist, said that obesity, stress, and a poor diet can lead to the formation of cysts. She advised that if a patient notices any changes, they should consult a doctor immediately because if cysts are detected early, they can be treated with medication. However, if they grow larger, surgery may be necessary. She also added that while herbal medicines are effective in some cases, they cannot eliminate cysts. She stressed, "In my experience in obstetrics and gynecology, none of my patients have fully recovered using herbal medicines, and even in many cases, cysts did not disappear with herbal treatment and required surgery." She believes that regular exercise, consuming fruits and vegetables, and reducing the intake of fatty foods are effective in preventing the formation of cysts. Conclusion: Some social media users and herbal medicine sellers claim that using certain herbal teas can treat uterine and ovarian cysts. However, health specialists reject these claims, stating that herbal teas cannot eliminate cysts. Verdict: While medicinal plants are beneficial for treating some diseases, they cannot eliminate cysts.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Portugal, Manuel Frederico Pinheiro da Silva, called on Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf at Naval Headquarters.

PHC grants protective bail to PTI leaders Abbasi, Waqas

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising Justice Shakeel Ahmad and Justice Syed Arshad Ali has granted protective bail to Special Assistant to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Brigadier (R) Musaddiq Abbasi till 5th December 5 while directed the federal government to provide details of cases registered against Abbasi in Punjab and Islamabad, on Friday.

The counsel, Alam Khan Adeenzai advocate informed the court that the petitioner is unaware of the number of cases filed against him. He requested the court to provide details of the cases so that Musaddiq Abbasi could appear before the relevant courts. PHC stopped arrested of Mussadiq Abbasi in any registered case till 5th December 2024 and

adjourned further hearing.

Meanwhile, PHC granted an extension of protective bail to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Central Secretary Information and Member National Assembly (MNA) Sheikh Waqas Akram till 5th December.

During the hearing, Adeenzai advocate informed the court that Sheikh Waqas is unaware of the details of cases registered against him in Punjab and Islamabad. The court directed the federal government and Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) to provide details of the cases filed against Sheikh Waqas.

Justice Shakeel Ahmed clarified that the court could not request details from Punjab but could request them from the federal government. Justice Arshad Ali questioned the need for protective bail if the case records were being sought. The counsel argued that for extension of pro-

ductive bail, granted by the court.

ATC grants three days physical remand: Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) Peshawar Judge Muhammad Iqbal Khan has granted a three-day physical remand of culprit Qadir Khan allegedly involved in financial support of banned organizations to Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD).

The alleged culprit was produced before ATC Judge Muhammad Iqbal Khan, where the investigating officer alleged that the suspect had provided significant financial assistance to commanders of outlawed groups. The officer claimed that Qadir Khan had smuggled several kilograms of gold, local and foreign currency from Khyber district and surrounding areas to militants across the border. The investigating officer requested the court to grant a physical remand for further investigation, which was approved by the court.

Bilawal hails PPP success in LG by-polls across Sindh

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has expressed his gratitude and appreciation for his party's resounding success in the recent local government by-elections across Sindh, including Karachi. Pakistan's cuisine

He celebrated this victory as a testament to the public's trust and unwavering support for the PPP, as well as the dedication and hard work of committed party workers.

In a statement issued by the Media Cell Bilawal House, he extended the heartiest congratulations to all successful PPP candidates, commending the tireless efforts of party workers who transformed the campaign into a decisive triumph. "Once again, the arrow has made its mark across Sindh, including Karachi, where the followers of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto have emerged victorious," he noted.

He emphasized that these results reflect the people's preference for inclusive public service over politics of division and discord. Addressing the newly elected representatives, Bilawal Bhutto expressed confidence in their dedication to uphold public trust. "This victory brings with it great responsibilities and challenges," he said. "You will face a landscape of limited resources and numerous issues, but your perseverance and commitment to the party's vision will guide the way forward."

Air Chief conferred upon award

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Deputy King of Bahrain Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa conferred Bahrain Medal-First Class upon Air Chief Zaheer Ahmed Babar Sidhu at Sakhr Air Base, Bahrain.

The medal was awarded to the Air Chief in recognition of his distinguished efforts to enhance military cooperation and defence collaboration between the two brotherly countries. The ceremony was witnessed by senior civil and military leadership of Kingdom of Bahrain.

On the sidelines of Bahrain International Airshow, Commander of Ninth Air Force (US Air Forces Central Command-AFCENT), Lieutenant General Derek France called on Air Chief Zaheer Ahmed Babar Sidhu. The Air Chief reiterated his resolve to further enhance the existing bilateral cooperation between the two strategic partners.

The Commander AFCENT appreciated Pakistan's efforts in promoting regional peace and vowed to enhance cooperation in the fields of joint training, mutual exercises and military to military collaboration. In a separate meeting, the Air Chief called on Commander in Chief of Bahrain Defence Force Field Marshal Shaikh Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa.

Sh Rasheed acquitted

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad District and Session Court has acquitted former interior minister and Awami Muslim League chief Sheikh Rasheed in the case pertaining to making defamatory remarks against President Asif Ali Zardari.

Rasheed was booked at Aabpara police station, last year, for making defamatory remarks against Asif Ali Zardari. The former minister appeared before the court in today's hearing along with his lawyers Masroof Khan and Sardar Shehbaz Raza. Judicial Magistrate Yasir Mahmood delivered the reserved verdict on Sheikh Rasheed's acquittal petition. AML chief Sheikh Rasheed was booked under three sections — 120B (criminal conspiracy), 153A (promoting enmity between different groups), and 505 (statements conducing to public mischief). In the FIR, complainant PPP divisional president stated that the AML chief tried to badmouth a former president and cause a "permanent danger" to the PPP co-chairman and his family.

KP CM reviews implementation of Awami Agenda

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, chaired an important meeting here at Chief Minister's Secretariat to review progress on the implementation of the Chief Minister's 99-point Awami Agenda. Principal Secretary to Chief Minister, Muhammad Abid Majeed, and other relevant officials attended the meeting. Concerned officials briefed the Chief Minister on the progress so far made with regard to implementation of 99 point agenda.

It was informed that under the Chief Minister's open-door policy, all Deputy Commissioners have issued schedules for public meetings to ensure easy access of the general public to government offices and officials, and so far 429 Khulli Kachehris have been held across the province, including 27 for women, 17 for minority communities, 14 for farmers, 18 for differently-abled persons, and 11 for traders which were attended by the high ups of district administrations and heads of line departments.

It was further informed that under special cleanliness campaign, 431 drives have been carried out in educational institutions, 843 public toilets, 590 canals, 1,066 roads, 287 recreational spots, and 298 bus stations have been cleaned across the province adding that under the waste disposal efforts, garbage dumped on 7,267 vacant plots has been cleaned. So far, 1,195 blocked drains have been opened, and 1,509 drains have been cleared, 439 sewerage lines have been cleaned, and 101 sewerage lines have been repaired.

Officials informed the meeting that actions against illegal dumping sites have resulted in the clearance of 368 sites, while 226 designated dumping sites have been notified for waste disposal, and added that to facilitate the public, 4,359 trash bins have been installed at various points across the province.

It was told that in terms of improving recreational facilities, 114 public parks have access to clean drinking water, and benches have been installed in 169 parks. Similarly, measures to enhance sports facilities have resulted in the provision of restrooms in 42 sports grounds and the reactivation of lights in 72 grounds.

Saif visits Paraplegic Centre Peshawar

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Barrister Dr. Muhammad Ali Saif, Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations, visited the Paraplegic Centre Peshawar.

During the visit, he inspected various its various sections and departments, including rehabilitation wards for persons with disabilities (PWDs), the physio gym, orthotics department, autism section, clubfoot clinic, occupational therapy gym, and other portions.

Barrister Saif appreciated that Paraplegic Centre Peshawar is a unique national institution providing rehabilitation services for PWDs in Pakistan and the neighboring brotherly country Afghanistan. The centre, he said, ensures the rehabilitation of individuals with spinal cord injuries and disabilities caused by accidents and empowers them to lead productive lives through training programs. Additionally, he maintained, the centre's in-house workshop is manufacturing customized

wheelchairs and other supportive devices tailored to the needs of persons with disabilities, meeting high-quality standards and modern requirements.

Barrister Saif acknowledged that these services not only make life easier for individuals with disabilities but also help them achieve financial independence by enabling active participation in economic activities.

Dr. M Ali Saif commended the exemplary services of the centre, particularly in rehabilitation and the production of customized wheelchairs and supportive aids. He assured that the government would take serious steps to further develop this local unique industry.

He further assured that the provincial government would prioritize the use of wheelchairs and supportive devices produced by the centre over imported alternatives, promoting this distinctive local industry. He noted that this initiative would not only ensure the availability of quality products locally but also save valuable foreign exchange.

The Advisor Information also pledged to address the challenges faced by the centre, including increasing its annual grant, reinstating the follow-up services for PWDs who return home, and restarting the vocational training programs for admitted PWDs. He also assumed that the Chief Minister would soon visit the centre to plan comprehensive measures for its further development.

Earlier, upon his arrival, Chief Executive Dr. Syed Muhammad Ilyas briefed the Advisor Information on the centre's performance and future expansion plans. Dr. Muhammad Ali Saif praised Dr. Syed Muhammad Ilyas and his team for their extraordinary efforts and services for PWDs. He expressed the KP government's commitment to making the Paraplegic Centre a national role model and supporting the establishment of similar rehabilitation centres across the country. He also directed the Department of Information and Public Relations to produce a documentary on the centre's exemplary services and promote it globally.

Sri Lankan president's coalition wins in election

COLOMBO (Reuters): Sri Lanka President Anura Kumara Disسانayake's leftist coalition won a thumping victory in a snap general election, gaining power to push through his plans to fight poverty and graft in the island nation recovering from a financial meltdown.

The sweeping mandate, which included surprise backing from the north and east of the country which is home to the minority Tamil people, is an unprecedented vote for change and indicates that Sri Lanka is in sync on moving ahead, analysts said. While the strong showing will strengthen political stability in the South Asian country, some uncertainty on policy direction remains due to Disسانayake's promises to try and tweak terms of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) rescue programme that bailed the country out of its economic crisis, they said.

The new government is also expected to face a talent challenge as the coalition has few leaders with governance and policy-making experience. Disسانayake, a political outsider in a coun-

try dominated by family parties for decades, comfortably won the island's presidential election in September.

But his coalition had just three seats in parliament, prompting him to dissolve it and seek a fresh mandate in Thursday's snap election. Sri Lanka typically backs the president's party in general elections, especially if voting is held soon after a presidential vote.

"The president has a huge mandate now to carry through the reforms but also huge expectations from the people," said Bhavani Fonseka, a researcher at Colombo think tank Centre for Policy Alternatives. "People are looking beyond the issues of the past ... people want to see a direct impact on the cost of living," she said.

Disسانayake's Marxist-leaning National People's Power (NPP) coalition won 159 seats in the 225-member parliament, the election commission said on Friday, a massive two-thirds majority and one of the biggest in the country's history. NPP secured almost 62% or almost 7 million votes, up from the 42% Disسانayake

won in September, indicating that he had drawn more widespread support including from minorities.

The Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna party of the Rajapaksa family, whose cohort of brothers gave Sri Lanka two presidents during a dozen years in power and had 145 seats in the outgoing legislature, was virtually wiped out, winning just three seats. "We see this as a critical turning point for Sri Lanka. We expect a mandate to form a strong parliament, and we are confident the people will give us this mandate," Disسانayake said after casting his vote on Thursday.

"There is a change in Sri Lanka's political culture that started in September, which must continue." Celebrations were largely muted, with the exception of a few NPP loyalists who lit fireworks on the outskirts of the capital, Colombo. The Samagi Jana Balawegaya party of opposition leader Sajith Premadasa, the main challenger to Disسانayake's coalition, won 40 seats and the New Democratic Front, backed by previous President Ranil Wickremesinghe, won just five seats.

Trump says Moscow-Kyiv war has 'gotta stop'

WASHINGTON (AA): US President-elect Donald Trump said that his administration will work hard to end the Russia-Ukraine war, adding that the conflict needs to come to an end. "We're going to work on the Middle East, and we're going to work very hard on Russia and Ukraine. It's gotta stop. Russia and Ukraine's gotta stop," Trump said at a gala for the America First Policy Institute at the Mar-a-Lago Club in Florida.

"I saw a report today. Thousands of people over the last three days were killed. Thousands and thousands were killed. They happened to be soldiers, but whether they're soldiers or they're people sitting in towns, we're going to work it," he added. Turning to his election victory last week, Trump said the American people delivered "something very, very amazing".

"The biggest political victory in 129 years... We swept all swing states. We won the popular vote," he said. He stressed that the country is "doing good" since he was elected on November 5. "Now the only thing is, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important, maybe you should pass a bill — you have to start my term from November 5, OK? Or November 6 if you want. November 5, because the market's gone through the roof, enthusiasm's doubled in the last short while," he said.

Republicans secured a majority in last week's election, assuming control of the House and Senate and the White House. Trump won the election with 312 electoral votes, surpassing the 270 threshold against his Democratic rival Vice President Kamala Harris. He will be sworn into office on January 20, 2025 for a four-year term.

Meanwhile, all eyes were on Donald Trump's transition team, after a series of provocative and startling cabinet choices that showed the president-elect's preference for absolute loyalty above experience or expertise. Trump has been rapidly rolling out his foreign policy and national security picks, but he is expected to shift focus over the coming days to key figures to enact his domestic agenda.

The Republican leader has yet to select treasury and commerce chiefs to help set tax and trade policy, a health secretary to oversee abortion, transgender care and a host of other potential flashpoints, or someone for education — a department Trump wants to abolish. He told podcaster Joe Rogan in an interview before last week's presidential election that his biggest mistake during his first term in the White House was hiring "bad people, or disloyal people."

Conduct ultrasound of females Opp MPA objects over appointing male staff

PESHAWAR (APP): Opposition member belonging to Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, Rehana Ismail speaking on calling attention notice in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assembly on Friday demanded to appoint female ultrasound technician in Lady Reading Hospital (LRH).

She said that most of the female patients preferred to go undiagnosed in absence of female ultrasound technician in LRH that is major hospital of the city. Moreover, she said that appointing males to conduct ultrasound of female patients in inappropriate

and against our traditions and norms.

She said that it is astonishing that there is dearth of female ultrasound technicians despite that the population ration of women is 55 percent in our country. Responding to calling attention notice, Provincial minister, Zahir Shah Toru said that both male and female staff has been working in radiology department to serve patients and some of the male doctors are also working as gynecologists in medical field. He said that we could not agree to the objection as it would promote gender discrimination.

tion in the profession where both female and males are working side by side to serve ailing patients.

Law Minister, Aftab Alam said that there are reservations relating to matter due to our culture and traditions and said that government is also pondering over the problem and situation would be improved very soon. The mover also said that matter should be handed over to standing committee to ascertain exact number of female ultrasound staff. Deputy Speaker referred the calling attention notice to standing committee after voting.

Iran backs Lebanon in ceasefire talks

BEIRUT (Reuters): Iran backs any decision taken by Lebanon in talks to secure a ceasefire with Israel, a senior Iranian official said on Friday, signalling Tehran wants to see an end to a conflict that has dealt heavy blows to its Lebanese ally Hezbollah.

Israel launched airstrikes in the Hezbollah-controlled southern suburbs of Beirut, flattening buildings for a fourth consecutive day. Israel has stepped up its bombardment of the area this week, an escalation that has coincided with signs of movement in US-led diplomacy toward a ceasefire. Two senior Lebanese political sources told Reuters that the US ambassador to Lebanon had presented a draft ceasefire proposal to Lebanon's parliament speaker Nabih Berri the previous day. Berri is endorsed by Hezbollah to negotiate and met the senior Iranian official Ali Larjani on Friday.

Asked at a news confer-

ence whether he had come to Beirut to undermine the US truce plan, Larjani said: "We are not looking to sabotage anything. We are after a solution to the problems." "We support in all circumstances the Lebanese government. Those who are disrupting are Netanyahu and his people," Larjani added, referring to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Hezbollah was founded by Iran's Revolutionary Guards in 1982, and has been armed and financed by Tehran. A senior diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity, assessed that more time was needed to get a ceasefire done but was hopeful it could be achieved.

The outgoing US administration appears keen to secure a ceasefire in Lebanon, even as efforts to end Israel's related war in the Gaza Strip appear totally adrift. World powers say a Lebanon ceasefire must be based on UN Security

Council Resolution 1701 which ended a previous 2006 war between Hezbollah and Israel. Its terms require Hezbollah to move weapons and fighters north of the Litani river, which runs some 20 km (30 miles) north of the border.

Israel demands the freedom to act should Hezbollah violate any agreement, which Lebanon has rejected. In a meeting with Larjani, Lebanon's caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati urged support for Lebanon's position on implementing 1701 and called this a priority, along with halting the "Israeli aggression," a statement from his office said.

Larjani stressed "that Iran supports any decision taken by the government, especially resolution 1701," the statement said. Israel launched its ground and air offensive against Hezbollah in late September after almost a year of cross-border hostilities in parallel with the Gaza war.

Protesters storm parliament in Georgia

TBILISI (Reuters): Protesters stormed the parliament of the Russian-backed breakaway Georgian region of Abkhazia on Friday and opposition politicians demanded the resignation of the self-styled president over an unpopular investment agreement with Moscow.

Protesters used a truck to smash through the metal gates surrounding the parliament in the capital Sukhumi. Video from the scene then showed people climbing through windows after prying off metal bars and chanting in the corridors. Eshsou Kakalia, an opposition leader and former deputy prosecutor general, said the parliament building was under

the control of the protesters.

"We will now seek the resignation of the current president of Abkhazia," he was quoted by Russia's Interfax news agency as saying. Protesters also broke into the presidential administration offices located in the same building as the parliament. Emergency services said at least eight people were taken to hospital.

The presidential administration said in a statement that authorities were preparing to withdraw the investment agreement with Russia that some Abkhaz fear will price them out of the property market. Russia recognized Abkhazia and another breakaway region,

South Ossetia, as independent states in 2008 after Russian troops repelled a Georgian attempt to retake South Ossetia in a five-day war.

Most of the world recognizes Abkhazia as part of Georgia, from which it broke away during wars in the early 1990s, but Russian money has poured into the lush sub-tropical territory where Soviet-era spa resorts cling to the Black Sea coast. Abkhazian lawmakers had been set to vote on Friday on the ratification of an investment agreement signed in October in Moscow by Russian Economy Minister Maxim Reshetnikov and his Abkhazian counterpart, Kristina Ozgan.