

Seven killed in mishap  
F.P. Report

MUZZAFFARABAD: At least seven people were killed and three injured when a passenger van fell into a deep ravine in Muzaffarabad. The passenger van, which was heading from Muzaffarabad to Manjhotar, lost control of the driver and fell into a deep ravine. The police and rescue teams reached the spot after receiving information, and with the help of locals, retrieved the bodies and injured.



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# IMF seeks implementation to meet targets

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) issued its communiqué on Saturday after concluding meetings with Pakistani authorities.

According to the communiqué, mission chief Nathan Porter led the IMF team during negotiations with Pakistani authorities from Nov 12-15 in which talks were also held with the provincial governments and private sector. It further said that interaction with Pakistani side on the economic matters remained positive, adding that the IMF team visited Pakistan for biannual review of the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) in which economic reforms, policies and overall performance of the government was reviewed.

"The negotiations with Pakistani high-ups remained positive overall. The government is determined to collect tax from those sectors which were hitherto untaxed. Greater role of provinces for social protection and development also came under discussion," said Nathan Porter. He said challenges and reforms in energy sector were also discussed, adding that several sectors required enhanced input from the private sector and limited role of the government.

"The government strictly needs to implement targets agreed under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF)," he added. He went on to say that performance of the government will be highlighted in meeting with the IMF executive board while confirming mission's first quarterly visit in 2025.

Meanwhile, 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." The IMF mission is expected to visit Pakistan for the first economic review under the \$7 billion loan programme in early 2025.

## 7 dead, 10 injured in Kalat deadly attack

F.P. Report

QUETTA: At least seven people, including security personnel, are dead and 10 others injured in a deadly attack on a security check post in the restive Balochistan province on Saturday.

Following the attack, details of which are awaited, there are widespread complaints from different parts of Balochistan about disrupted internet services. Seven people were killed in the attack and 10 others injured in Kalat district of Balochistan.

The banned Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) claimed responsibility for the attack. However, neither the provincial government nor any senior law enforcement official have come out with any statement.

The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority

(PTA) confirmed that mobile internet services have been temporarily suspended in certain areas of Balochistan, citing public safety concerns amidst a recent surge in terrorist attacks. The PTA statement explained that the decision followed directives from relevant authorities and was implemented to ensure public safety given the security situation in these areas.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif strongly condemned the terrorists' attack on unarmed civilians in Johan area of district Kalat, Balochistan. The prime minister prayed for the elevation of ranks of those killed in the incident and grant of courage to the bereaved families to bear the loss with equanimity.

In a statement issued by the PM Office Press Wing, the prime minister directed to provide best medical

facilities to those injured in the incident. He also ordered to take immediate actions against the people involved in the incident and give them exemplary punishment.

Condemning the terrorists' cowardly attack on the innocent civilians, the prime minister said the elements involved in spreading unrest and insecurity in Balochistan were the enemies of the people and development of the province. Such despicable acts cannot shake the government's commitment to the development and prosperity of Balochistan, he said adding that the cowardly attacks cannot weaken the nation's resolve. He vowed to crush the evil designs of the enemies of Pakistan saying that the government will continue its war till the complete eradication of the menace of terrorism from the country.

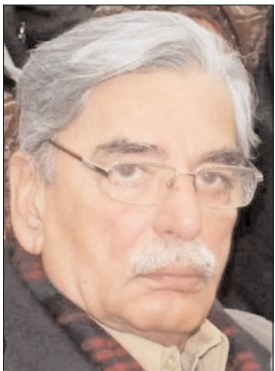
## ANP leader Ilyas Bilour breathes his last

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Awami National Party (ANP) leader and former senator Ilyas Ahmed Bilour breathed his last here at a hospital in Peshawar, his family members confirmed on Saturday.

"The brother of Haji Ghulam Ahmed Bilour, Shaheed Bashir Ahmed Bilour, Aziz Ahmed Bilour and father of Ghazanfar Bilour, former senator Ilyas Ahmed Bilour has passed away," said ANP leader Samar Haroon Bilour in her social media post. Confirming Ilyas's demise at the age of 84, the deceased's brother and senior party leader Ghulam Ahmed said that the former lawmaker was suffering from a kidney disease and had been receiving treatment at a hospital in Peshawar for several months. He passed away at 4am, he stated.

Late Ilyas Bilour was affiliated with ANP since the beginning of his political career and remained a member of the upper house of parliament from 2012 to 2018. Providing details of the funeral, Samar said his funeral prayer will take place at Peshawar's Wazir Bagh at 2p.m. on Sunday and the deceased will be laid



to rest in his ancestral graveyard.

During his political career, Ilyas had served in various capacities including vice president of Standing Committee of IPU on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade for Asia Pacific and Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry. As a businessman, apart from being a life member of SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the politician had also served as Pak-Asia Business Council chairman and was twice elected as the president of Indo-Pak Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif have expressed deep grief and sorrow over the

death of the former senator. They extended heartfelt condolences to the family members and prayed for courage for the bereaved family. Both the leaders also lauded the politician's services for the cause of democracy, country and its people. Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday expressed deep grief and sorrow over the demise of Awami National Party leader and former Senator Ilyas Ahmed Bilour. The prime minister prayed for the departed soul and patience and strength for the bereaved family, according to a statement issued by the PM Office Press Wing.

"Ilyas Ahmed Bilour's remarkable services for the welfare of the people are commendable," PM Shehbaz said. He said as a Senator, Ilyas Ahmed Bilour represented the public with excellence. "The late leader's political contributions will be remembered," he said adding that the space created in the political landscape due to the death of Ilyas Ahmed Bilour will be difficult to fill. Meanwhile, KP Governor Faisal Karim Kundi also expressed sorrow over the ANP leader's demise and said that his political and social services will long be remembered.

## Biden, Xi set for tense final meeting

LIMA (Reuters): Joe Biden meets Chinese president Xi Jinping for the last time as US president on Saturday, but the leaders' goal of lowering tensions before Donald Trump's inauguration is challenged by fresh conflicts over cyber crime, trade, Taiwan and Russia.

Biden and Xi will huddle on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum in Lima, Peru - for their first talks in seven months - where Pacific Rim leaders are assessing the implications of Trump's return to power as US president on Jan. 20. They were set to meet at 4 p.m. local time (2100 GMT), the White House said. Washington is incensed by a recent China-linked hack of the telephone communications of US government and presidential campaign officials, and it is anxious about increasing pressure by Beijing on Taiwan and Chinese support for Russia.

Taiwan President Lai Ching-te is planning to stop in the US state of Hawaii and maybe Guam on a sensitive visit that is sure to anger Beijing in the coming weeks, Reuters reported on Friday. Meanwhile, Biden met Taiwan's representative to the summit, former economy minister Lin Hsin-i, who invited him to visit Taiwan in the near future. China views democratically governed Taiwan as its own territory. The US is Taiwan's most important international backer and arms supplier, despite the lack of formal diplomatic recognition.

At the same time, Beijing's economy is taking a stiff hit from Biden's steps on trade, including a plan to restrict US investment in Chinese artificial intelligence, quantum computing and semiconductors and export restrictions on high-end computer chips. All of those topics are expected to figure into the talks, US officials said. China routinely denies US hacking allegations, regards Taiwan as internal matter and has protested American statements on Sino-Russian trade. A spokesperson for the Chinese Embassy in Washington declined to comment.

## Super Typhoon makes landfall in Philippines

MANILA (AFP): Super Typhoon Man-yi has made landfall in the Philippines with the national weather forecaster warning of a "potentially catastrophic and life-threatening" impact, as waves up to 14 metres (46 feet) high pounded the coastline. On Saturday, Man-yi was packing sustained wind speeds of 195 km/h (121 mph) when it slammed into Catanduanes island at 9:40pm (13:40 GMT), the forecaster said.

Waves 14 metres (46 feet) tall pummeled the shore of Catanduanes, while Manila and other vulnerable coastal regions were at risk from storm surges reaching up to more than three metres (10 feet) over the next 48 hours, the forecaster said.

Man-yi could hit Luzon - the country's most populous island and economic engine - as a super typhoon or typhoon on Sunday afternoon, crossing north of Manila and sweeping over the South China Sea on Monday.

The Philippines ordered the evacuation of hundreds of thousands of people and cancelled dozens of flights before the sixth storm in a month approached the archipelago. All vessels - from fishing boats to oil tankers - were also ordered to stay in port or return to shore.

"If preemptive evacuation is required, let us do so and not wait for the hour of peril before evacuating or seeking help, because if we did that we will be putting in danger not only our lives but also those of our rescuers," Interior Undersecretary Marlo Iringan said. State weather agency PAGASA warned of a "potentially catastrophic and life-threatening situation" for the central region of Bicol, where nearly 180,000 people have been evacuated.



BAKU: Secretary Climate Change and Environment Coordination Ministry, Aisha Humera Moriani and UNICEF's Deputy Executive Director, Kitty Van de Heijden sign declaration on children, youth and climate action.

## Tarar urges courts to decide May-9 cases swiftly

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar has called upon courts to expedite decisions regarding the May 9 incidents.

Addressing a news conference on Saturday, he presented alleged evidence implicating senior Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders in orchestrating attacks on sensitive installations and memorials of national martyrs.

He claimed that detailed video evidence, including CCTV footage from Lahore, Gujranwala, Rawalpindi, Peshawar, and other cities, directly linked the PTI leaders and members with violence. "The evidence is undeniable, and it is now up to the courts to ensure swift justice," he stated.

The minister accused the PTI leaders of being part of a "well-organised

conspiracy" and said they received direct instructions to target key national sites. "They kept asking for evidence, and now it is in front of everyone," he added. Tarar criticised the PTI founder and his associates for allegedly damaging national identity and security while consistently denying responsibility. He questioned whether they would apologise to the nation and accept accountability for their actions.

He referred to the PTI as the "Tehreek-e-Inteshar" (Movement for Chaos), accusing the party of looting and causing unrest as part of its agenda. "They attempted to harm national security, and their actions align with the narratives of our enemies," he added. The minister promised that all evidence, including CCTV footage, was secure and unalterable. He stressed the need for a swift resolution of pending cases to set a precedent and deter such inci-

dents in the future. Concluding his address, Tarar urged PTI leadership to apologise to the nation and stop calling for foreign interference. He reiterated that justice must be served to prevent chaos in future. He referred to the PTI as the "Tehreek-e-Inteshar" (Movement for Chaos), accusing the party of looting and causing unrest as part of its agenda. "They attempted to harm national security, and their actions align with the narratives of our enemies," he added. The minister promised that all evidence, including CCTV footage, was secure and unalterable.

He stressed the need for a swift resolution of pending cases to set a precedent and deter such incidents in the future. Concluding his presser, Tarar urged PTI leadership to apologise to the nation and stop calling for foreign interference. He reiterated that justice must be served to prevent chaos in future.

## Thick smog continues to disrupt life in Punjab

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Punjab continues to grapple with a severe smog crisis as its capital, Lahore, remained engulfed in toxic air on Saturday, maintaining its position atop the list of the big cities across the globe with worst air quality. The smog crisis hits the most populous province of the country every winter, but air pollution has worsened in the recent years, as a result of cold air trapping dust, low-grade diesel fumes and smoke from illegal stubble burning on fields.

Today, the air quality index (AQI) was recorded a "hazardous" 766 in Lahore — where the air quality has deteriorated over the past month. As per the Swiss group's live air quality monitor, the (PM2.5) pollutants — the fine particulate matter in the megapolis that causes the most damage to health — was 87.4 times higher than the World Health Organisation's (WHO) annual air quality guideline value around 9am.

Meanwhile, Multan remained the most polluted city in the country, in terms of air quality, despite a decline in the AQI compared to the extremely high smog levels recorded during the past week. The AQI in the southern Punjab city was 396 around 9am, which is well within the hazardous range.

Karachi, on the other hand, had the sixth worst air quality in the world, with an AQI of 188, which is deemed "unhealthy" by the Swiss group, IQ Air. The hazardous smog has severely impacted daily life, with poor visibility, disrupted traffic flow, and health concerns plaguing residents.

Dense fog has significantly reduced visibility, causing major arteries to close for traffic. M4 Motorway was blocked from Multan to Toba Tek Singh, while M5 Motorway was blocked from Multan to Sukkur. The district administration has

said all markets across the city will remain closed for two days this weekend — Saturday and Sunday. Moreover, leaves of medical staff have been cancelled after health emergency was imposed in Lahore and Multan.

Major traffic disruptions were also reported from Kamalia, Orgarra, Gujrat, Kot Addu and surrounding areas, as drivers faced hazardous conditions due to extremely low visibility. In an unfortunate incident, a man died after being hit by a trailer near Rojhan Miani Phatak area in Rajanpur, police said, blaming the accident on smog and low visibility. With no immediate relief in sight, residents have been advised to stay indoors and avoid unnecessary travel.

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 the Punjab capital and Multan hit record levels this month, prompting authorities to take extraordinary measures to fight off smog. On Friday, Punjab government declared a health emergency in the two cities to limit the impact of toxins present in the air on citizens' health. The authorities have also banned construction, extended schools' closure for another week and shifting all educational institutions to online classes.

Meanwhile, entry to parks, zoos, playgrounds and other public spaces also remained restricted. As the smog continues to smother the country, authorities are urging citizens to wear masks and limit outdoor activities. Other parts of South Asia are also dealing with high levels of pollution and Punjab blames neighbouring India for contributing to its hazardous air quality. New Delhi, the world's second most polluted capital, has banned non-essential construction, moved children to virtual classrooms and asked residents to avoid using coal and wood from Friday.

## US congressmen pen another letter to Biden for playing role in Imran's release

WASHINGTON: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) took another U-turn as its sympathisers in US congress again wrote a letter to President Biden while urging him to intervene in the domestic affairs of Pakistan. As many as 46 US congressmen wrote a letter to Biden for playing role in the release of PTI founder Imran Khan.

The US congressmen only talked about PTI instead of discussing the Indian atrocities in Kashmir or rising terror incidents in Pakistan. The political analysts said that the PTI buried its own anti-US narrative by seeking support from

President Biden. "PTI preferred the political benefits over national interest," said Sindh Information Minister Sharjeel Memon.

He said that PTI founder is strategic agent of Israel and the Jewish lobby is working against the national interest of Pakistan. Senior analyst Syed Muhammad Ali said that PTI only wanted anarchy and chaos in the country. "PTI doesn't believe in constitution and democracy," he said. Former Information Minister Murtaza Solangi said that PTI has engaged a lobbying firm to write letters to the US government.

"All these US congressmen are anti-Pakistan and pro-India," said Solangi. Earlier, it was reported that US congressmen who wrote letter to President Biden last month were from the Jewish lobby. The investigation had revealed that 21 congressmen were anti-Pakistan while 13 were pro-India. Moreover, 29 congressmen were supporting Israel on many fronts. The former prime minister has been incarcerated since August last year after his conviction in several criminal case ahead of the February 8 elections. — Agencies

KP CM calls party meeting  
F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A day after chairing the PTI Punjab chapter consultative meeting, KP Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur on Saturday called meeting of party leaders including MNAs and MPAs from KP. According to reports, the party meeting is set to take place at the KP CM House in which MNAs, MPAs from KP and provincial ministers of the KP government would also participate.

## No indication Imran faces military trial, says UK

LONDON: British Foreign Secretary David Lammy has said that there are no recent indications from the Pakistani authorities that they intend to try former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan in a military court.

The UK Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs said this in his response to Kim Johnson MP's letter which he wrote to the British government on request of Zulfi Bukhari, Khan's adviser on international affairs. Lammy MP said: "I have raised concerns about the potential use of military courts to try civilians, including Imran Khan. Such courts can lack transparency and independent scrutiny, making it difficult to assess compliance with international standards."

"We have no recent indications from the Pakistani authorities that they intend to try Imran Khan in a military court, but my officials continue to monitor the situation closely," he added. Bukhari had arranged a letter for the UK government from 20 MPs from all parties, a month ago. It had raised concerns about the changes in judiciary and the passage of 26th Amendment. The foreign secretary said: "While Pakistan's judicial processes are a domestic matter, we have been very clear that the Pakistani authorities need to act in line with their international obligations and with respect for fundamental freedoms, including the right to a fair trial, due process and humane detention. This applies to Imran Khan as it does to all Pakistan's citizens."

Lammy said: "Like you, I remain concerned by restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly, including in relation to the political opposition. In our engagements with the authorities, we continue to underline that the freedom to hold and express views without censorship, intimidation or unnecessary restriction is a cornerstone in a democracy. — Agencies





LAHORE: Visitors admire paintings at an exhibition organized by PNCA and LCWU at Shakir Ali Museum. —APP Photo

## LESCO's 1,933 feeder declared load-shedding free

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) has declared 1,933 out of the total of 2,221 feeders as load-shedding free.

According to LESCO spokesman here Saturday, the Chief Engineer (Operations) Abbas Ali has released new categories of the feeders. Out of 2221, he added, 1933 feeders were declared load shedding free.

As per the new categories, 1601 feeders with zero to 10 percent line losses have been placed under category one; and 332 feeders with 10 to 20 percent line losses placed under category two. No load shedding is being done on the feeders included in the first and second categories.

A total of 145 feeders with 20 to 30 percent line losses have been placed under category three, and there is three-hour load-shedding on this category. While, 83 feeders with 30 to 40 percent line losses fall under category four with four-hour load-shedding duration.

Similarly, 28 feeders having 40 to 60 percent line losses have been put in category five and are facing five-hour shut downs, he said and added that six-hour load-shedding is being done on 26 feeders of category six with line losses of 60 to 80 percent.

Six feeders with more than 80 percent losses are included in category seven where there is seven hours load-shedding.

## 74 new dengue cases reported

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab health department confirmed on Saturday that 74 new cases of dengue fever have been reported across the province in the past 24 hours.

According to a report, Rawalpindi recorded the highest number of cases with 65, followed by Lahore, Attock and Chakwal, which reported two cases each. Single cases were also reported in Faisalabad, Sahiwal and Pakpattan.

Over the current week, Punjab has seen 496 new cases, bringing the total number of dengue cases in the province to 7,334 for the year 2024. The Health department assured the public that hospitals are fully equipped with necessary medications and resources to handle the increasing influx of patients.

Health officials have stressed the importance of preventive measures, urging citizens to maintain cleanliness, eliminate standing water and cooperate with health teams operating in the affected areas.

To assist the public, the department has set up a helpline at 1033 for information and to report dengue-related concerns.

Authorities are calling for enhanced public awareness and strict compliance with preventive measures to control the rising trend of dengue cases across the province.

The situation demands collective efforts from the public and authorities to curb the spread of the virus and ensure the health and safety of citizens.

## Thousands attend Baba Guru Nanak birth celebrations

LAHORE (APP): The 555th birth anniversary of Baba Guru Nanak Dev Ji concluded in Nankana Sahib on Saturday.

Provincial Minister for Minority Affairs Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora participated in the event alongside the Sikh community. Federal Minister Chaudhry Salik, Members of the Punjab Assembly, and Members of the Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee also took part in the spiritual ceremony.

During the event, a Nagar Kirtan procession was taken out from the Gurudwara Janam Asthan, which culminated at the Gurudwara Kiara Sahib. Sikhs from around the world, including from the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and India, attended the procession in a large number. The Sikh pilgrims offered religious prayers and prayed for the prosperity and development of Pakistan.

The district administration also organized a spectacular fireworks display, which added to the grandeur of the occasion.

Provincial Minister Ramesh Singh Arora presented "Saropes" to the Deputy Commissioner of Nankana Sahib and other relevant officials in recognition of their efforts. He also praised the officials of the Evacuee Trust Property Board for their contributions.

Ramesh Singh Arora stated that this year, historic arrangements were made in Nankana Sahib, and the efforts of all the organizers were commendable. He mentioned that Sikh pilgrims would now visit various Gurudwaras to perform their religious rites, and all necessary facilities would be provided to them.

## Sialkot's incident culprits to be brought to justice: Hina

LAHORE (APP): Member of the Provincial Assembly and Chairperson of Punjab Women Protection Authority, Hina Pervaiz Butt, on Saturday stated that those involved in Sialkot's Motra area incident will not only be brought to justice but there is also an urgent need to change societal attitudes.

It is worth mentioning here that in Sialkot's Motra area, three suspects involved in the gruesome murder of a pregnant woman by her in-laws have been arrested. A few days ago, the police received information about a woman named Zara who had gone missing from her in-laws' house.

Under the leadership of DSP Daska and SHO Motra, the police apprehended the culprits within 24 hours and recovered dismembered parts of the victim's body, which the suspects had disposed of in a drain. According to the police, all the accused — including the mother-in-law, sister-in-law, and the sister-in-law's son — have confessed to their crime.

Reacting to this tragic incident, Hina Pervaiz Butt remarked that this sorrowful event in Sialkot exposes the growing intolerance and tendency for violence in our society. The brutality inflicted on Zara is not just a crime but reflects our societal apathy and lack of emotional resilience, where even minor disputes escalate to extreme actions like taking a life.

She further expressed regret, pointing out that this incident, unlike typical cases of male violence, involved women as perpetrators. This highlights the degradation of societal values and a lack of love, patience, and understanding in the traditional family system. This tragedy compels us to introspect and teach the next generation tolerance and humanity instead of intolerance.

Hina Pervaiz Butt assured that the perpetrators of this heinous crime would face the harshest punishment because only through the rule of law can crime rates be reduced.

## Mayor orders completion of uplift work at Aziz Bhatti Park

KARACHI (PPI): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab has said that the revitalization of open spaces, gardens, and playgrounds enhances the city's image and restores vibrancy.

This he said while reviewing the ongoing development work at Aziz Bhatti Park today. Director General Parks Junaidullah Khan and other officials were also present on this occasion.

Wahab directed that the development work at Aziz Bhatti Park be completed swiftly, stating that it is an old and well-known park in Karachi being revitalized and restored, adding that the park has a large area where modern recreational facilities will be provided to allow families to spend pleasant moments together.

He said the construction, rehabilitation, and improvement of parks are ongoing across all seven districts of Karachi.

"Parks not only provide recreational facilities but also add to the city's charm. Special amenities for children and women will be provided in these parks," the mayor said.

Additionally, he said the construction and renovation of Bagh Ibn-e-Qasim, Burns Garden, Kidney Hill, and other parks have been completed. Citizens are encouraged to visit these parks and enjoy the available recreational facilities.

## Sindh Food Authority inspects 350 more food outlets

KARACHI (PPD): Sindh Food Authority (SFA) has intensified its efforts to ensure food safety and regulatory compliance across Sindh, conducting more than 350 inspections in a single day.

According to a handout issued from Sindh Information Department, these comprehensive inspections, carried out on November 16, 2024, spanned multiple districts and resulted in the issuance of improvement notices, the imposition of fines, and the advancement of licensing processes, all aimed at safeguarding public health.

In District South, two SFA teams conducted 35 inspections, issuing 11 improvement notices and imposing fines amounting to Rs. 640,000. Similarly, in District Kemari, 12 inspections were conducted, leading to five improvement notices and fines totaling Rs. 90,000. The District Korangi team carried out 48 inspections, during which 15 improvement notices were issued, 12 fines totaling Rs. 520,000 were imposed, and 15 license challans worth Rs. 146,900 were issued. District Malir saw 15 inspections, resulting in 11 improvement notices and fines amounting to Rs. 300,000. In District East, a total of 40 inspections were conducted, resulting in the issuance of 3 improvement notices and 7 fines totaling Rs. 155,000, additionally, 10 license challans were issued. In Shaheed Benazirabad (SBA), 18 inspections were carried out, leading to the issuance of 13 improvement notices and 7 license challans were issued. In Mirpurkhas, 18 establishments were inspected, leading to the issuance of three improvement notices, while the Hyderabad Vigilance Team conducted 23 inspections, issued 17 improvement notices, and imposed fines of Rs. 120,000. Inspections were also carried out in other districts, including Umerkot-Tharparkar, Sanghar, Thatta, Qambar-Shahdadkot, Matiari, Badin, Tando Muhammad Khan, Dadu, and Tando Allahyar, with a focus on ensuring compliance with food safety standards and promoting public health.

## Over Rs2 billion spent on police welfare: IG

LAHORE (APP): Under the leadership of Inspector General of Police Punjab, Dr. Usman Anwar, priority initiatives for the welfare of the police force and their families are underway.

The IG Punjab said that significant enhancements have been made in all welfare categories, and over Rs2 billion has been spent on welfare initiatives for the force during the first 10 months of this year. He said that Rs692.5 million was spent for educational scholarships for the children of police personnel. Employees facing health issues were granted over Rs229.1 million under the medical grant category. Daughters of police personnel received over Rs492.8 million in the form of wedding gifts. Funeral expenses amounting to Rs53.4 million were provided to the families of police employees. Farewell grants exceeding Rs264.8 million were disbursed to retired employees. Families of police personnel received over Rs223.5 million in maintenance allowance.

Additionally, families of police martyrs were given Rs25 million for house construction while emergency assistance and legal aid funds worth over Rs23.4 million were also provided to police officials.

The IG Punjab said that the financial difficulties of employees are being addressed through the Police Welfare Fund and departmental welfare resources. He assured that further measures are being taken to enhance welfare efforts for the police force and their families.

## Commissioner distributes face masks to citizens

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Divisional Commissioner Zaid Bin Maqsood distributed masks to citizens in the Model Town Link Road market as part of ongoing efforts to combat smog in the city.

The Commissioner, talking to the public, emphasized the importance of precautionary measures as city faces smog crisis, stating that wearing masks is the primary defense against the harmful effects of smog.

"Lahore is currently enveloped by smog, and it is crucial for all citizens to take preventive measures," he urged. He further explained that an emergency has been declared to tackle the smog issue, and the administration is actively carrying out a crackdown on activities contributing to smoke and pollution.

"Mask-wearing is the first line of defence against smog," he stressed, highlighting that it is now mandatory for every citizen to wear a mask. "Smog poses serious health risks, and adopting precautionary measures is a responsibility of every citizen," he added, calling on the public to cooperate in reducing the impact of smog.

The Commissioner also assured that the administration is committed to continuing its strict actions against the sources of smoke and pollution in Lahore, ensuring that public health is protected during this critical period.

## CM Punjab stresses tolerance, respect, harmony in society

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has emphasized the immense importance of tolerance, respect, and harmony in society.

In her message on International Day for Tolerance being celebrated on Saturday, the CM noted that the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) set exemplary standards of tolerance throughout His life, and it is imperative for us to follow His teachings.

"Tolerance, respect, and understanding form the foundation of a successful and peaceful society," the CM said. The world is a mix of diverse beliefs, cultures, and ideologies, and it is essential to respect all of them, she added.

The chief minister also highlighted the importance of promoting tolerance and harmony in line with the vision of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. "Educational institutions must teach the values of tolerance, respect, and love to the younger generation," she stated. Hatred and prejudice only weaken societies, she mentioned.

CM Maryam Nawaz further stressed that the ideal society is one that ensures equal opportunities and rights for all citizens. "We must accept differences and promote mutual respect, tolerance, and dignity. Pakistan should be a beacon of peace, tolerance, and brotherhood," she added.

The CM reiterated the need for a society where all individuals are treated equally and with respect, emphasizing that Pakistan must strive to become an example of tolerance and unity for the world.

## Sindh governor says youth key to country's progress

KARACHI (PPI): Governor Sindh, Kamran Khan Tessori, emphasized the presence of talented officers and youth in Pakistan, describing them as key to the country's progress.

Speaking to trainee officers at the National Institute of Management, he urged the need to move forward, stating that advancement is the cornerstone of a nation's development, according to a statement issued from Governor House today.

During his visit, the governor participated in a flag-hoisting ceremony, planted a tree as part of a plantation drive, and unveiled a board featuring the directives of the nation's founder.

Governor Tessori reiterated his commitment to ensuring justice and resolving public issues, pledging to go wherever he is needed. He called for collective efforts to overcome challenges, stressing unity and constructive approaches over criticism.

He also highlighted the importance of taking ownership of the province and city while promoting inclusivity by celebrating festivals of all minority communities at the Governor House. Tessori concluded by stating that the willingness to assist is abundant, but leveraging this potential depends on the country's capacity to utilize it effectively.

## Police arrest 228 under anti-smog action plan

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Police have registered 212 cases and arrested 228 individuals involved in activities causing smog, under the Anti-Smog Action Plan, this year.

In a statement issued on Saturday, the Lahore Police spokesman said that the Transport Department, in its joint operations with the Lahore Police, imposed fines totaling over Rs. 18.4 million on elements responsible for smog in the provincial capital, this year.

In addition, he reported that more than 50,000 vehicles were inspected with over 4,000 fined for emitting excessive smoke. More than 4,000 vehicles had their documents seized for lacking fitness certificates, while over 5,000 vehicles were impounded. More than 1,900 vehicles, without valid fitness certificates, were declared substandard, he reported.

Lahore Police's action against individuals engaged in burning harmful materials led to eight people's arrest for burning fuel, tar coal and carbon boards. It nabbed 89 for burning construction materials; 18 for burning crops' residue; 29 for burning tires, plastic and shopping bags and 51 others for illegal burning in factories. Additionally, 33 individuals involved in setting garbage to fire were also arrested.

Meanwhile, CCPO Bilal Siddique Kamayana stated that strict enforcement of government Standard Operating Procedures (SPOs) for smog control was underway. He emphasized that police teams along with the district administration, Environment Protection Department and Transport Department were collaborating on these efforts. The Punjab Safe Cities Authority's cameras were being fully utilized to monitor and act against smog-causing transport violations, he said.

The CCPO urged to accelerate operations against smoke-emitting vehicles, crops' stumble burning and illegal industrial activities. He reiterated the commitment to a zero-tolerance policy regarding smog SOPs' violations and urged citizens to report any polluting activities to the line departments via the helpline 15.

## Philippine CG visits Sundas Foundation, pledges support

LAHORE (APP): Fahdel Sheikh, the honorary consul general of Philippines, visited the Sundas Foundation here on Saturday, where he met with patients suffering from thalassemia and hemophilia.

During the visit, Fahdel Sheikh toured the facilities and reviewed the various services provided by the foundation. He distributed gifts and sweets to the patients and pledged ongoing support. He also expressed his commitment to raising global awareness about the foundation's efforts in providing essential care to individuals with blood disorders.

Fahdel Sheikh reaffirmed his strong commitment to supporting the foundation's mission and assured that he would play an active role in promoting its work on a global scale. He committed to supporting the foundation in exploring ways to attract further international aid, which will help sustain and expand vital services for thalassemia and hemophilia patients in Pakistan.

Sundas Foundation Medical Director Dr. Adnan Gilani briefed the honorary consul general in detail about the foundation's services.

He highlighted that the foundation provides free treatment and medication to over 7,000 thalassemia patients, whose lives depend on regular blood transfusions. Dr. Gilani also shared insights on the foundation's comprehensive care, patient guidance, and awareness programs aimed at improving the quality of life for those affected.

Foundation's President Yaseen Khan expressed his gratitude for the Consul General's visit and encouragement. The senior leadership of the foundation, including Chief Operating Officer Abdul Sattar, Director of Finance Ali Rauf, and Muhammad Yaqoob, were also present.

## Registration process for mass marriages complete

LAHORE (APP): The registration process for marriages of underprivileged girls has been successfully completed as part of the "CM's Dhee Rani Program."

By the deadline, a total of 4,957 applications were received. Acting on Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's directives, the Punjab government has allocated Rs500 million for the first phase, which will see the mass marriage of 1,500 couples. The Social Welfare Department will manage 3,000 mass marriages at a total cost of 1 billion rupees.

Provincial Minister for Social Welfare and Bait-ul-Mal Sohail Shaukat Butt announced that the last date for submitting applications was Friday, 15 November, by which 4,957 applications had been received. These applications were collected via the Punjab Information and Technology Board (PITB) portal. The highest number of applications came from Muzaffargarh (307), followed by Lahore (269), while the lowest number of applications came from Gujrat (15). Over 70 percent of the applicants are women aged between 18 and 25 years. The remaining registered couples will be married in the second phase, which will commence soon.

The minister stated that the mass marriage program, initiated by the CM, aims to bring about positive social change and improve the overall welfare of marginalized communities. Girls aged between 18 and 40 years from low-income families residing in Punjab are eligible to apply. Orphaned, destitute girls, and daughters of disabled individuals will be given priority.

Only the verified copies of the NADRA identity cards of the bride and groom, along with those of the parents or guardians, are required.

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# Kundi expresses condolence over demise of Ilyas Bilour

PESHAWAR (APP): The Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Saturday expressed his profound grief and sorrow over the death of former Senator Ilyas Ahmad Bilour.

In a statement, the Governor extended his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family, offering his deepest sympathies during this difficult time.

"The death of Ilyas Ahmad Bilour is an immense loss, not only to his family but to the entire province," said Governor

Kundi. "His contributions to society and politics will always be remembered, and his legacy will continue to inspire future generations."

The Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa prayed for the forgiveness of the deceased and prayed for strength and patience for his family to bear this immense loss.

"I stand in solidarity with the Bilour family in this sorrowful moment," he added. "May the Almighty grant them the courage to cope with this great tragedy."

## Governor condemns terrorist attack on security forces

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Saturday strongly condemned the terrorist attack on security forces in Kalat area of Balochistan. Expressing his deep sorrow over the incident, the Governor paid tribute to the brave security personnel who lost their lives in the attack.

In his statement, Governor Faisal Karim Kundi prayed for the elevation of the martyrs' ranks and extended his heartfelt condolences to the families of the deceased.

He also prayed for patience and endurance for the bereaved families during this difficult time.

The Governor reiterated that the sacrifices of the martyrs in the ongoing war against terrorism will never be forgotten and that the nation remains united in its resolve to defeat extremism and violence.



PESHAWAR: US Consul General Shante Moore meeting with Advisor to Chief Minister KP on Information and Public Relations Barrister Dr. Saif.

# US Consul General calls on Advisor to CM KP

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Shante Moore, the US Consul General stationed in Peshawar, held a meeting on Thursday with Barrister Dr. Saif, the Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations.

The two officials discussed a broad range of issues, from economic development to regional stability.

Barrister Dr. Saif emphasized the tremendous sacrifices made by the people of Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa in their ongoing efforts to establish peace. "The people of this province have paid a heavy price for stability," he said. "Without sustainable peace, economic progress will remain a distant dream."

He urged the United States to take a more active role in supporting long-term peace in the region.

Consul General Moore acknowledged the challenges faced by the province and highlighted the mutual benefits of a strong and stable Pakistan. "A prosperous Pakistan is

in the interest of the United States and the entire region," Moore said, reaffirming America's commitment to aid Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in achieving its development goals.

Both sides agreed on the need for collaborative efforts to promote economic growth, enhance healthcare, and improve education. They underscored their commitment to a shared vision of a secure and prosperous Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and explored ways to deepen bilateral ties moving forward.

# Pakistan hosts first ever G4 alliance meeting



**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: The Northwest in Peshawar proudly hosted the 16th Meeting of the Permanent Council of the Global Alliance for Surgical, Obstetric, Trauma, and Anesthesia Care (G4 Alliance), marking a historic moment as Pakistan became the host country for this prestigious international event.

The G4 Alliance conference was organized and successfully conducted by Prof. Dr. Muhammad Tariq Khan, a consultant Neurosurgeon at Northwest and Dr. Almas Fasih Khattak, a Global Surgery Advocate at Northwest. The conference brought together global healthcare leaders, policymakers, and experts to collaborate on strategies to improve access to life-saving surgical, obstetric, trauma, and anesthesia (SOTA) care in low- and middle-

income countries (LMICs).

Speaking during the press conference, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Tariq Khan told that awareness is key with regard to trauma brain injury and burn care so that the cases could be reduced in the country. He stressed the need for community engagement and preventive measures to address the pressing health challenges.

Other renowned healthcare professionals, including Neil Wetzgi (Australia), Franco Servadei (Italy), PJ Devereaux (Canada), Gail Rousseau (USA), Richard Henker, Lee Wallis and many others also spoke on the occasion.

They highlighted various steps being taken by Pakistan to address the health challenges and saying as a flagship initiative of G4 Alliance and WHO, the OER showcased its transformative potential in improving surgical out-

## 6 lakh citizens benefited from Sehat Card: Ihtesham

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister on Health, Ihtesham Ali, announced the successful reactivation of the Sehat Card program under the leadership of Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur. The program, which had been rendered inactive during the caretaker government, was prioritized and reinstated immediately upon the assumption of office by the current administration.

Highlighting the program's achievements over the past eight months, Advisor Ihtesham Ali shared that a total of PKR 24 billion has been spent, providing free healthcare to 6,89,523 residents across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He added that 322,701 men and 366,821 women received free medical treatment under the Sehat Card. "Among these, 1,97,305 individuals availed treatment at private hospitals, while 4,93,216 individuals were treated in public hospitals," he said.

Ihtesham credited CM's commitment to public health for the program's revival and success, stating that the Sehat Card is a lifeline for countless families.



PESHAWAR: Activists of Jamaat Ahle Sunnat chanting slogans during a protest rally. — F.P. photo by Ghulam Murtaza



PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadeem Aslam Chaudhary presiding over a review meeting on polio eradication.

# Chief Secretary chairs meeting on polio eradication

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: The Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Nadeem Aslam Chaudhary, presided over a critical meeting on polio eradication in the province the other day that was attended by Commissioners of D.I. Khan, Kohat, and Peshawar Divisions, the Director General of Health, and provincial and federal officials working on polio eradication.

Representatives from international organizations, including Deputy Director Polio Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, representatives of UNICEF, and the WHO, also participated in the meeting.

The meeting aimed at evaluating strategies and measures to combat polio in light of the recent cases reported in the province.

Health officials provided a comprehensive briefing on the current situation, including details about affected children, status of polio vaccination campaigns in union councils, and overall challenges.

During the session, participants discussed the recent surge in polio cases in specific areas and devised strategic decisions to reassess and enhance the eradication strategy.

Emphasis was placed on garnering increased public support to address this critical public health challenge effectively.

Addressing the participants, Chief Secretary Nadeem Aslam Chaudhary stressed the importance of public cooperation, involvement, and awareness in the fight against polio. He directed division-

al and district authorities to take further proactive steps to ensure community engagement. "Public cooperation has been pivotal in our polio eradication efforts so far, and it remains indispensable until the complete elimination of the virus," he stated.

The Chief Secretary also expressed his gratitude to Deputy Director of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Michael Galway, for his visit support in the fight against polio in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

# SCCI announces 3-day mourning after death of Ilyas Ahmad Bilour

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Senior office bearers of Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry expressed grief over sad demise of leader of Businessman Forum former senator Ilyas Ahmad Bilour and stated that Ilyas Bilour services for business community will always remember and vacuum that has been created after his death will take much time to fill it.

SCCI announced a three-day mourning under which the flag will remain half-mast at the chamber building and all activities will also remain suspended till

Monday next.

According to details, the Businessman Forum leader former senator Ilyas Ahmad Bilour passed away after prolonged illness last night on the SCCI office bearers and members of business community expressed great grief and offered prayers for the departed soul of the late Ilyas Ahmad Bilour.

It is noted to mention here that Ilyas Ahmad Bilour remained a fourth time member of the Senate of Pakistan who raised an effective voice for resolution of business community issues and right of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's rights.

Ilyas Ahmad Bilour has proved from his character and personality that he is the only man who has played a central role in the resolution of issues because of which the business community gave due worth and importance to his services.

The business community said the death of Ilyas Ahmad Bilour is an irreparable loss.

President SCCI Fazal Moqem Khan, senior vice president Abdul Jalil Jan and vice president Shehryar Khan expressed deep grief over the sad demise of former senator Ilyas Ahmad Bilour and stated the vacu-

um has been created after his death, it will take long time to fill it.

Office bearers said Ilyas Ahmad Bilour is not only a successful businessman but also a very good human being.

Fazal Moqem said services of Ilyas Ahmad Bilour for the business community, promotion of trade and export remained remarkable, which will be remembered for many decades.

Office bearers vowed to serve the business community without any discrimination by following footprints of Ilyas Ahmad Bilour.

# Training of 1200 minority youth in soft skills successfully completed



**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Department of Auqaf, Hajj, Religious and Minority Affairs, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa organized Under ADP a "Capacity Building and Employability Skills Training Program" to more than 1200 youth across the province.

Training was given on communication skills, leadership skills, entrepreneurship, CV making training, interview training, career counseling and competitive exam preparation.

Training were organized in Peshawar, Swat, Abbottabad, Chitral, DI Khan, Kohat.

Training camps have been conducted under the program. In which prominent trainers and renowned experts of the country trained the youth. The program was organized in two phases.

Each six-day training camp included more than 80 young men and women from the Christian community, Hinduism, Sikhism

and other minorities. Which completed the figure of 1200.

In the training camp, food and training hall, accommodation and other excellent arrangements were made for the participants, trainers and staff.

The Training was to acquire the skill of refinement and presentation.

At the end of the training program, a simple and dignified ceremony was held in Peshawar in which the chief guest was the Provincial Adviser on Information, Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif, besides former Special Assistant for Minority Affairs, Minister Zada, the Additional Secretary for Endowments, Hajj, Religious and Minority Affairs, Abdul Kabir participated in the event.

Addressing the ceremony, former Special Assistant Wazir Zada said that the provincial government is trying for the welfare of the minorities. In this regard, the provincial government has taken many steps and more steps will be taken.

Wazirzada further said that the provincial government has allocated quota for minorities in various jobs and the youth should take advantage of them. He said that the provincial government has started minority youth training, scholarship program and stipend program. Providing facilities and opportunities to the students of the minority community in all educational fields, former Special Assistant Minister Zada congratulated Consultant Liaison Corporation, Department and youth on the best training program.

Barrister Mohammad Ali Saif, the chief guest of the event, said that the youth have to work on their character development. High character only rejects personality. Young people should focus all their attention on knowledge and character building. Success can be achieved only with high character.

Barrister Saif further said that it is necessary to acquire knowledge for conscious development. We have to change our thinking and bring about change. It is necessary to take action to improve the quality of human life. Education, knowledge and Skills can make human life easier.

Barrister Saif further said that the youth should determine the direction of their lives and the society will move on a better path through individual character building, which will improve the collective life.

The Information Adviser further said that by working on humanitarian basis beyond color, race, caste, language and religion, one can make one's life and the world a cradle of peace and development.

The quality of personality is not riches but high character. Life is the name of struggle, young people are not afraid of competition, only those who compete get success.

At the end of the ceremony, certificates were presented to the participants and commemorative shields to the guests.

# Govt's claims regarding industrial development false

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Unveiling the poor progress of the Federal and Punjab government, Adviser to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Finance and Inter-Provincial Coordination Muzamil Aslam has said that government's claims regarding industrial development are false.

He claimed that the production of the development in the month of September was negative 1.92%, in August it was negative

2.6%.

Muzamil Aslam further wrote that one can imagine unemployment in the country. These statistics are for those who are celebrating the stock market performance.

Adviser to the Chief Minister on Finance Muzamil Aslam expressed his surprise and said that in the end it is becoming difficult for me to decide whether the first number in the worst performance is Punjab (bhateji) or Federation (chacha).





## In brief

### Free medical camp arranged F.P. Report

**TIMERGARA:** Pakistan Central Muslim League organized a free medical camp in Tehsil Sammar Bagh, where hundreds of men, women, and children received free check-ups and medicines, on Saturday. Dr. Ibrahim provided medical services, while Malik Tazim Khan, General Secretary of Pakistan Central Muslim League Tehsil Sammar Bagh, managed the camp. Abdul Ghaffar Mansoor, President of Central Muslim League Malakand Division, and Muhammad Yasin, General Secretary of Pakistan Central Muslim League Lower Dir, distributed clothing among deserving children, provided bedding to the needy, and gifted Quran translations to local dignitaries. Leaders of Central Muslim League pledged to establish more free medical camps in other areas, prioritizing service to deserving individuals. They urged government institutions and philanthropists to fulfill their responsibilities and serve the public. Finally, the leaders expressed gratitude to the local community.

### Judges inspect District Jail F.P. Report

**MUZAFFARGARH:** Additional District and Sessions Judge Chaudhry Muhammad Asif, accompanied by Senior Judge Chaudhry Imran Ali, visited the District Jail. The judges inspected various barracks, including the juvenile ward, where they inquired about cases involving children and facilities provided to them, expressing their satisfaction. They also visited the jail kitchen to evaluate food quality, which they commended, and inspected the jail hospital to check on the health of incarcerated patients. The judges examined the Public Call Office (PCO) to assess telephone facilities available to inmates. Additionally, they expressed contentment with cleanliness, security, and overall management of the jail. Superintendent Jail Rasool Bakhsh Kalachi accompanied them throughout the visit.

### 3 people injured in road accident F.P. Report

**SIALKOT:** Three people were injured in a collision between a motorcycle and a car at Kotli Ameer Ali to Lodhray village, Sialkot. According to Rescue spokesperson, seven-year-old Noor Fatima, 10-year-old Abdullah and 17-year-old Hamid were injured in the road accident at Kotli Ameer Ali to Lodhray village, Sialkot. Rescue 1122 provided the first aid to the injured and shifted them to a hospital. Meanwhile, Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Zulqarnain along with District Police Officer (DPO) Rana Umar Farooq visited Gurdwara Baabe Di Ber Sahib, and reviewed the security and administrative affairs in detail. According to details, Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Zulqarnain and DPO Rana Umar Farooq said that strict arrangements had been made for the security of pilgrims from home and abroad who are coming to participate in the 555th birth anniversary celebrations of Baba Guru Nanak. They said that security had also been deployed at religious places of worship and monuments of Sikhs. DC Zulqarnain said that the constitution of Pakistan guarantees that the minorities have full freedom to live according to their religious beliefs.

# Kundi vows to bring peace, prosperity to province

## F.P. Report

**D I KHAN:** Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi on Saturday reiterated to continue his struggle for ensuring peace and prosperity in the province with bringing southern districts including Dera Ismail Khan on a par with developed areas of the country.

He expressed these views while addressing a ceremony organized by the Institute of Medical Allied and Nursing Sciences (IMANS) here. Expressing concern over the province's security situation, Faisal Karim Kundi said, "The Governor, Chief Minister, and IG Police belong to this region, and we have to work collectively for the betterment of Dera Ismail Khan and the province as a whole."

The KP chief minister has focused processions and sit-ins by leaving the province at the mercy of militants, he added. The Governor emphasized that his focus was on changing the fate of the people of the province, as the incumbent provincial government had badly failed to deliver on promises.

He also criticized Punjab for halting the supply of wheat, flour, and poultry to

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa which was contributing to the state in the form of gas, oil, and electricity, it did not receive its fair share of resources. The Governor expressed his gratitude to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the Federal Minister for WAPDA, and especially the Chairman of WAPDA, for allocating funds for the Lift Canal project, which will be inaugurated soon.

He said that the mega project would bring a green revolution in the area. It would boost the agriculture sector, enabling the region to meet the country's food requirements. He also mentioned that the work on a four-lane road project from Dera Ismail Khan to Dera Ghazi Khan and onward to Kashmir was underway. The portion of this project lying in Sindh province has already been completed.

He said that he was also making efforts to establish the campus of Air University in DI Khan, adding, he has talked with the authorities concerned of Higher Education Commission (HEC) and the Pakistan Airforce. He also highlighted several upcoming development projects, including the restoration of Dera Ismail Khan Airport.

He added these projects would be inaugurated soon, making the region a hub of economic activities.

Moreover, he added that the work on laying down the gas pipeline in Korai and Kotla Seydan areas was also underway. He said that efforts were underway to build the Chakdara-Dir Road under the Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) with the support of Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, and this project will be inaugurated soon.

Highlighting the increasing demand for skilled manpower in this field from various countries, the governor stressed the need to focus on providing training that meets international standards. He said that through the Red Crescent Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, international donors are being brought to the province, and efforts will be made to resolve issues in the merged districts.

The province will soon see developmental projects under the Red Crescent's supervision, he added. Chairman of the Red Crescent Society, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Habib Malik Orakzai and founder of IMANS, renowned lawyer Malik Tahir Waseem Dyal also spoke on the occasion.

# Tribesmen demand release of JI leader in Khyber

## F.P. Report

**LANDI KOTAL:** People from different walks of life demanded of the provincial government to ensure safe release of district leader of Jamat-e-Islami (JI), Khan Wali Afridi who has been arrested by Counter Terrorism Department five days back in connection of First Information Report (FIR) in murder (302) case, lodged against him in Khyber.

Under the auspices of JI, Khyber, a protest rally was organized at Bacha Khan Chowk, Landi Kotal on Saturday that was attended by JI workers, volunteers of various political parties, councillors and members of civil society.

Addressing on the occasion JI Khyber Ameer Shah Faisal, district Deputy General Secretary JI Ziaula Haq Afridi, Tehsil Chairman Haji Shah

Khalid, JI Landi Kotal Ameer Murad Hussain, tehsil General Secretary (GS) Jamiat Ullema-e-Islam, (Fazalrehman) Azeem Shah, Awami National Party (ANP) General Secretary, Landi Kotal Abdul Jabbar, Laborers Union Torkham head Abdul Salam, Zarnoor Afridi and others categorically condemned arrest of the JI district leader, Khan Wali Afridi and said the sin of the detainee was only to raise voice against injustice.

They maintained that militancy, target killing and unemployment prevail from Bajaur to Waziristan but ironically the authorities were active in filing fake First Information Report against the political and tribal elders. In spite of sealing the Western border, militancy on rise in Tirah Valley that put question mark on the efficiency of

security agencies, they added and said jointly they could struggle against injustice and wrong doings.

They urged the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to materialize his pledge, withdraw all fake FIRs, filed against political and tribal elders in Khyber and guarantee safe and sound release of Khan Wali. Till safe and sound release of Khan Wali Afridi, they will continue their agitation, the protestors threatened.

They marched till the main gate of the tehsil gate and dispersed peacefully. It is to be mentioned here that the police department had lodged FIRs against scores of political and tribal elders in Khyber in connection of delivering hatred speeches against forces and hospitality of Pakhtun Qaumi Jirga, organized at Regi, the boundary of Khyber and Peshawar at last month.



**LANDI KOTAL:** People holding a rally at Bacha Khan Chowk against arrest of Jamat-e-Islami district leader, Khan Wali Afridi.

# Experts guide students on career pathways

## F.P. Report

**MUZAFFARABAD:** The Allied Health Society of the University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (UAJK), in collaboration with the Pakistan Army, marked the second day of the Allied Health Sciences Expo 2024 with an exciting blend of academic engagement, cultural exhibitions, and skill-building sessions. Among the highlights of the day was an exclusive session titled "The Actual Art of Resume Writing," delivered by Mubashar Naqvi, Public Relations Officer of UAJK.

This impactful session focused on empowering students with the skills needed to craft professional and compelling resumes tailored to the needs of the modern job market. Speaking to a packed audience, Mubashar Naqvi

emphasized the importance of a well-organized resume in creating a strong first impression with employers.

"Your resume is not just a document; it is a representation of your potential and the gateway to your professional future. A well-crafted resume can set you apart in a competitive environment," he stated. He also shared actionable strategies for structuring resumes, aligning them with industry standards, and effectively showcasing skills and achievements.

In another engaging session, Syed Raza Ali Kazmi, Additional Secretary at the Presidential Secretariat, encouraged students to believe in their capabilities and embrace perseverance for a brighter future. "Consistency and belief in your potential will pave the way for a successful career.

Today's students are tomorrow's leaders, ready to contribute as doctors, engineers, and professionals dedicated to national progress," he said.

Ijlal Haider Naqvi, Managing Director of Career Advisors, delivered a session on scholarship opportunities and career development. She guided students on leveraging educational and professional resources to achieve academic and career success.

The Expo also featured research presentations by health sciences scholars and interactive Q&A sessions with faculty. Students from Azad Kashmir, all four provinces of Pakistan, and Gilgit-Baltistan enthusiastically participated in showcasing their regional cultures through traditional attire, local cuisines, and creative projects related to health sciences.



**KARAK:** KP Minister for Higher Education, Meena Khan Afridi inaugurating Academic Block at Khushal Khan Khattak University.

## Two killed in Nowshera motorcycles collision Syed Waliullah Shah

**NEWSHERA:** At least two youths were killed and as many others injured when two motorcycles collided head on in Nowshera district on Saturday morning.

Police said the mishap occurred in Shedoo area of Nowshera district where two speedy motorcycles collided head on. As a result, two youths identified as Waqar and Hashir Shahid were killed on the spot while two others were injured. Rescue workers shifted the deceased and injured to a nearby hospital. Police said all the victims belonging to the Shedoo area were on their way to Shah Kaleem Dam for a picnic.

## Robber who killed bank manager held F.P. Report

**KOHAT:** Police in Kohat on Saturday claimed to have arrested an accused who shot dead a bank manager on resistance during a bank robbery some days ago. DPO Kohat, Umar Khan told media persons here that Bili Tang police of Kohat have arrested the killer of the bank manager after restless efforts and investigation on scientific lines.

He said following a successful investigation, police traced the killer and conducted a raid on the possible hideout of the suspect in the vicinity of Bili Tang police station. During the raid the accused was arrested and an amount of Rs 190,000 and the weapon used in the bank robbery was recovered from his possession. The accused was shifted to Bili Tang police station for further legal procedure. The DPO said accused involved in attacking lives and properties of the people could not escape the grip of law. He also commended the police performance for tracing and arresting the accused.

## Police arrests 11 miscreants F.P. Report

**SARGODHA:** The district police claimed on Saturday to have arrested 11 miscreants from various parts of the district and recovered contraband from their possession.

According to a spokesperson, the arrested outlaws were identified as Inaam, Wasim, Rashid, Imran, Kamran, Suleman, Tahir, Kaleem, Wajahat, Nouman and Khaleel. The police recovered 2.6 kg hashish, 1.3 kg heroin, 345 litres liquor, 12 pistols, four guns, 235 bullets, 333 empty bottles and valuables worth millions of rupees from them. Further investigation was underway.

## 11 injured F.P. Report

**MULTAN:** At least 11 passengers were injured after a bus skidded off the road and fell into a small nullah in thick smog near Awan Chowk, Head Muhammad Wala, here on Saturday.

According to rescue officials, a passenger bus was going to Khushab from Karachi, when it skidded off the road and fell into a small nullah.

# New academic block inaugurated at KKKUK

## KP govt working to align education with needs of modern era, says Minister

### F.P. Report

**KARAK:** Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Higher Education Meena Khan Afridi has said that provincial government was making tireless efforts to align education with the needs of the modern era and to produce market oriented best manpower.

He expressed these views while addressing the inaugural ceremony of newly constructed building of Khushal Khan Khattak University Karak as Chief Guest on Saturday. The ceremony was also attended by Vice Chancellor of the university, Professor Dr. Naseeruddin, Provincial Minister for Agriculture Muhammad Sajjad Barakwal, Member National Assembly Shahid Khan Khattak, Member Provincial Assembly Khurshid Ahmed Khattak, professors and students.

The provincial minister said that it is a good that literacy rate in Karak district

is very encouraging and added that there is still a need to popularize research culture. He said that we can only progress and achieve respectable position among comity of nations by prioritizing education and utilizing resources for the purpose.

Earlier, Prof Dr Naseer Ud Din the Vice chancellor of KKKUK extended a warm welcome to all participants including the chief guest Meena Khan Afridi, Minister for Higher Education, Major Sajjad Barakwal, Minister for Agriculture, MNA Shahid Khattak, MPA Khurshid Khattak, Registrar KKKUK Dr Ghani Ur Rehman and Heads of all academic and administrative departments from karak and kohat university.

Addressing on the occasion the vice chancellor highlighted the university's commitment to academic excellence and research.

Talking about the inter-national conference, he said

that it brought together diverse groups of faculty, scholars, and administrative staff from KKKU and Kohat University. Participants engaged in insightful discussions, presented research papers on various social science topics, and participated in panel discussions to explore innovative solutions for Pakistan's social challenges.

Speaking on the occasion, Meena Khan Said that the government prioritize youth development in the fields of education, research and science and technology to stand shoulder to shoulder in the world comity. The minister added, "the efforts on the part of KKKUK is a testament to dedication to energy research and education. This state-of-the-art facility will provide a conducive environment for students and faculty to undertake cutting-edge research and contribute to sustainable energy solutions".

# Political activists join PkMAP in Bannu

## F.P. Report

**BANNU:** Several families resigned from other political parties and announced to join the Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party and expressed their confidence in the leadership of Mehmood Khan Achakzai, on Saturday.

Jirga was held in which Provincial General Secretary Malik Haroon Khan Advocate, Provincial Sports Secretary Abrar Banuzai District Secretary Shoaib Khan Saduzai Advocate General Secretary Alauddin Wazir and other officials and workers participated on this occasion led by Malik Sher Ali Baz Khan Kausar Fateh Khel. The leaders and youths of Feroze Fateh resigned from various political parties along with their families and formally announced their joining the Pashtun Khwa Milli Awami Party. Malik Haroon Khan

Advocate, District President Shoaib Khan Saduzai, Provincial General Secretary of Milli Awami Party, said that the series of joining ceremonies and organization has been started in 116 village councils of Bannu district, through which the message of party leader Mehmood Khan Achakzai will reach the Pashtuns.

The Milli Awami Party is peacefully struggling for unity and unity of Pashtuns from Chitral to Bolan, is suffering from backwardness due to which the feeling of deprivation is increasing within the Pashtun nation. The entire Pashtun nation is gathering under the banner of the National Awami Party and Quaid Mehmood Khan Achakzai and is ready to make all kinds of sacrifices to empower the people over the resources here. Today, lobbying is being done to bring back the war business

in this region once again, but the Pashtun nation is now united and will not come under anyone's acting and artifice.

**Residents facing unscheduled load shedding:** In Bannu city and adjacent areas, people are facing serious problems due to electricity load shedding as well as gas outages. The women working in the houses are facing household problems.

Chairman Bannu City Abid Khan, Raheel Aslam, Syed Adnan Hashmi Shahid Khan, Omar Daraz Khan and other representatives told the media that as soon as the winter starts in Bannu city and adjacent areas. There has been an increase in electricity load shedding and gas load shedding, due to which not only the people are facing severe suffering, but the businessmen and women of the houses are also affected in their household affairs.

# Fisheries dept releases 15000 fish in Ravine

## Fazal Haq

**MARDAN:** The Department of Fisheries Mardan has taken an important step to protect the aquatic life and promote the natural environment. A stock of 15,000 fish was released in the Katti Ghari drain in the presence of Additional Assistant Commissioner Katlang Sahar Anwar and Assistant Director Fisheries.

On this occasion, the Assistant Director of Fisheries said that the aim of this initiative is to pro-

mote the natural breeding of fish and ensure the protection of water resources. He added that protection of aquatic life is our national and moral responsibility, and such measures not only help in maintaining the ecological balance but also benefit the local people.

AAC Sahar Anwar said that increased fish breeding is not only environmentally beneficial but will also boost the local economy. He appealed to the people to fulfill their responsibility for the protection of aquatic life and avoid illegal hunt-

ing of fish. On this occasion, the local people appreciated the initiative of the Fisheries Department and said that it will increase the production of fish in the area and provide new employment opportunities to the people.

This initiative is a positive step towards the conservation of natural resources and environmental improvement by the Department of Fisheries Mardan, which will play an important role in the development of the area in the future.

# Suspended employees hold protest

## F.P. Report

**LARKANA:** The six suspended members of Arts Council of Pakistan (ACP) Larkana, protested the suspension of their membership during the opening ceremony of Larkana Literary

Fair on the occasion of the arrival of Arts Council Larkana Chairman and Commissioner Larkana Ghulam Mustafa Phull, Deputy Commissioner Larkana Sharjeel Noor Chana.

At the same time Poets,

writers, storytellers, writers and painters on behalf of the former officials of Larkana protested in the premises of the Arts Council while the demonstrators carried banners in their hands. A sit-in was held while shouting slogans.





# Corruption overshadows Ukraine's reconstruction program

KYIV (AFP): When Bart Gruyaert agreed to help rebuild destroyed apartment blocks outside Kyiv, he hoped to be one cog in Ukraine's vast reconstruction programme, repairing just some of the damage wrought by Russia's invasion.

But when the French company he works for, Neo-Eco, applied for building permits in the town of Gostomel, the local military administration asked the company to transfer the funds for the multimillion-dollar project to its bank account, under the pretence that it would run the project directly. Officials told Gruyaert, "it's better if you transfer the money you received to our account," he recalled. "But it doesn't work like that," he told AFP.x

The company refused, and progress on the initiative, which had secured 20 million euros in private funding, immediately slowed. It marked the latest example of the endemic corruption that has plagued Ukraine since it became independent after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. After Neo-Eco's refusal on the bank transfer, the local administration started dragging things out, adding new requirements to the contract and trying to incentivise the company to "give envelopes" to the right people, Gruyaert alleged.

The company reluctantly decided to abandon the project in September 2023, saying it was "impossible" to work under such conditions. Following the saga, Ukrainian investigators said they had uncovered a system of "embezzlement" in the Gostomel military administration and accused its head Sergiy Borysiuk of appropriating around 21 million hryvnia (\$470,000) meant for the reconstruction of houses and apartments. In June 2023, after the allegations surfaced, Borysiuk was dis-

missed by President Volodymyr Zelensky.

He had pre-empted his removal with a press conference several days earlier in which he said he had done "everything possible" to ensure reconstruction efforts. "It seems to me that you are looking for the enemy in the wrong place," he said. The case is far from isolated. Even though Ukraine has stepped up its anti-graft measures over the past decade to advance its ambition of joining the European Union, corruption scandals are still rife.

Transparency International ranked Ukraine 104 out of 180 countries in its "corruption perceptions index," up from 144 in 2013. For some officials, Russia's invasion has provided new opportunities for personal enrichment. Several high-profile cases of alleged embezzlement of reconstruction funds, as well as the arrest of officials for selling army exemption certificates, have emerged throughout the war. While a potential embarrassment for Ukraine, which relies on billions of dollars in Western financial support, Transparency International Ukraine's director Andriy Borovyk said attention to the cases showed the problem was not being "forgotten". And authorities also tout the uncovering of such schemes as a sign of "effective" enforcement.

Just 10 years ago, "who could have thought that senior officials could be accused of crimes?" said Viktor Pavlushchyk, head of the National Agency on Corruption Prevention. "Now we have some very good examples," he said. Around 500 corruption cases have been opened this year and 60 convictions secured, according to the National Anti-Corruption Bureau.

But there are lingering fears the persistent problem will hamper

Ukraine's massive reconstruction agenda, deterring international partners from putting up funds. The total cost of reconstructing Ukraine stands is estimated at \$486 billion, according to a joint study by the World Bank, UN, EU and Ukrainian government. Gruyaert has not been deterred by his experience in Gostomel, which was occupied by Russian forces in the first weeks of the February 2022 invasion.

Ukraine is "making a lot of progress" on corruption, Gruyaert said, adding that Neo-Eco has had to learn how to "zigzag between the various obstacles". The company is still working on several other projects and encourages other foreign investors to get involved. But, bruised by the Gostomel experience, it now prioritises working with cities where it has confidence it will not be asked for kickbacks.

Most concede that much remains to be done in Ukraine's anti-corruption fight, especially when it comes to reconstruction. It is still common for local officials to have stakes in construction companies through their relatives, several figures told AFP. Ukraine is trying to weed out such conflicts of interest and make the whole process more transparent. Last year, the country launched a platform listing all open projects. Called "DREAM", the aim is to enable investors, journalists and Ukrainians to track the progress of construction projects, said its head Viktor Nestulia.

A commitment to such openness will be key to reassuring foreign investors, said Mustafa Nayyem, an activist and journalist who headed the reconstruction agency until earlier this year. "The war is not an excuse not to fight corruption," he told AFP. Corruption, "is not in Ukrainian DNA, it's simply a question of will."

## France's new dictionary struggles to keep up with the times

PARIS (BBC): Forty years after they began the task - and nearly four hundred years after receiving their first commission - sages in Paris have finally produced a new edition of the definitive French dictionary.

The full ninth edition of the Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française was formally presented to President Macron this afternoon in the plush surroundings of the 17th century Collège des Quatre-Nations on the left bank of the Seine.

This is where the 40 wise men and women of the French Academy - so-called immortels (immortals) chosen for their contributions to French language and literature - have met since the body was first created by Cardinal Richelieu in 1635. Their task at the start was to "give certain rules to our language, to render it pure and eloquent" - to which end they set about writing their first dictionary. However, the job has proved so slow - the first book was not produced until 1694 and today it takes more than a year to get through a single letter of the alphabet - that the relevance of the enterprise is increasingly in question.

"The effort is praiseworthy, but so excessively tardy that it is perfectly useless," a collective of linguists wrote in the Liberation newspaper on Thursday. This ninth edition replaces the eighth, which was completed in 1935. Work started in 1986, and three previous sections - up to the letter R - have already been issued.

Today the end section (last entry Zzz) has been added, meaning the work is complete. In its press release, the Academy said the dictionary is a "mirror of an epoch running from the 1950s up to today," and boasts 21,000 new entries compared to the 1935 version. But many of the "modern" words added in the 1980s or 90s are already out of date. And such is the pace of linguistic change, many words in current use today are too new to make it in. Such common words like tiktokeur, vlog, smartphone and emoji - which are all in the latest commercial dictionaries - do not exist in the Académie book. Conversely its "new" words include such go-ahead concepts as soda, sauna, yuppie and supérette (mini-supermarket). For the latest R-Z section, the writers have included the new thinking on the feminisation of jobs, including female alternatives (which did not exist before) for positions such as ambassadeur and professeur. However print versions of the earlier sections do not have the change, because for many years the Académie fought a rear-guard action against it. Likewise the third section of the new dictionary - including the letter M - defines marriage as a union between a man and a woman, which in France it no longer is. "How can anyone pretend that this collection can serve as a reference for anyone?" the collective asks, noting that online dictionaries are both bigger and faster-moving. Under its president, the writer Amin Maalouf, the dictionary committee meets every Thursday morning and after discussion gives its ruling on definitions that have been drawn up in preliminary form by outside experts. Among the "immortals" is the English poet and French expert Michael Edwards, who told Le Figaro newspaper how he tried to get the Academy to revive the long-forgotten word improfond (undeeep).

# Top polluting cities revealed as activists fume at COP29 fossil fuel lobby



BAKU (AP): Cities in Asia and the United States emit the most heat-trapping gases that feed climate change, according to new data, as delegates at United Nations climate talks decide how much rich nations will pay to help the world cut emissions.

According to Climate Trace's annual data released at the Conference of Parties, or COP29, in Baku, Azerbaijan, seven states or provinces spewed more than 1 billion metric tonnes of greenhouse gases, all of them in China except the US state of Texas, which ranks sixth. Shanghai topped the list, producing 256 million metric tonnes.

The organisation, cofounded by former US Vice President Al Gore, also found that China, India, Iran, Indonesia and Russia had the biggest increases in emissions from 2022 to 2023 while Venezuela, Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom and the US had the biggest decreases in pollution. The release of the data comes as climate officials and activists alike are growing increasingly frustrated over the world's inability to clamp down on planet-warming fossil fuels as well as the countries and companies that promote them.

Oil executives, including from Total, BP, Equinor and Shell, appeared at the summit and said they would invest \$500m to expand access to sustainable modern energy and help people, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, to transition to clean cooking practices. But the sizeable presence of fossil fuel industry lobbyists at the meeting angered environmental groups and activists.

"It's like tobacco lobbyists at a conference on lung cancer," David Tong from campaign group Oil Change International told the AFP news agency. Bianca Castro, a climate activist from Portugal, also expressed her frustration, telling The Associated Press news agency that many groups are "losing hope in the process". The success of this year's climate summit hinges on whether countries can agree on

a new finance target for richer countries, development lenders and the private sector to deliver at least \$1 trillion each year to help developing countries cope with the rapidly changing climate.

A report by an independent panel of experts at the summit said countries need to invest more than \$6 trillion per year by 2030 or risk having to pay more in the future. But reaching a deal could be tough at the summit, where the mood has been soured by public disagreements and pessimism about shifts in global politics.

Argentina announced that it was withdrawing its delegation. And the presence of oil, gas and coal interests at the talks has also long been a source of controversy. The two most recent COPs have been held in energy-rich countries. Last year's was in the United Arab Emirates. The 2024 host, Azerbaijan, launched a defence of planet-heating fossil fuels with President Ilham Aliyev on Tuesday repeating his insistence that oil, gas and other natural resources are a "gift from God". "It's unfortunate that the fossil fuel industry and the petrostates have seized control of the COP process to an unhealthy degree," Gore said.

Activists from the Kick the Big Polluters Out (KBPO) coalition noted that Japan, for instance, brought employees of coal giant Sumitomo as part of its delegation, Canada included oil producers Suncor and Tourmaline, and Italy brought employees of energy giants Eni and Enel.

KBPO said the official attendance list of the talks featured more than 1,770 fossil fuel lobbyists. A group of leading climate activists and scientists also warned that the "global climate process has been captured and is no longer fit for purpose". A letter signed by former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, former UN climate chief Christina Figueres and leading climate scientists called for "an urgent overhaul" of the climate talks.

# Wildfires scorch New York amid historic drought

NEW YORK: An incinerated, rusty microwave, the charred skeleton of a lawn chair, a pile of melted clothes, and singed scraps of the Holy Bible sat ominously on the forest floor, alongside a smattering of scorched pinecones.

Under a canopy of blackened tree trunks, in a small clearing in the northwest section of Brooklyn's Prospect Park, the apocalyptic aftermath of a fire that engulfed a homeless encampment in the park's woods was still on display. A fire truck slowly circled the perimeter of the park while a squirrel scampered amongst fallen autumn leaves and parched earth.

Nearly a week after the brush fire, 26-year-old Brooklyn media arts teacher Jake Catalanotto could be seen curiously combing the site of the fire - roughly the size of two football fields - documenting the destruction on his camera. The lifelong Brooklyn resident was unnerved by what he saw. "There are burned-out husks of electronics and cans and spray cans, mat-

tresses," Catalanotto, 26, told Al Jazeera as he described the seared hellscape. "A little one of those things that you put over a fire to cook over it. Pots and pans."

October was the driest month on record in New York City, according to city officials - and between October 29 and November 12, a record-breaking 229 brush fires broke out across the city's five boroughs. Extraordinarily dry conditions - caused by one of the longest droughts in history - have turned much of the sprawling city's parks and the state's forested areas into a huge tinderbox, putting communities, politicians, and fire crews on alert.

A two-alarm brush fire in the north Manhattan neighbourhood of Inwood Hill Park caused smoke plumes to envelope the George Washington Bridge. A day earlier, Long Island volunteer firefighter Jonathan Quiles was arrested on arson charges for allegedly intentionally starting a brush fire in Medford, New York.

Upstate, along Greenwood Lake, which borders both New York and New Jersey, a 5,000-acre blaze killed a parks worker, threatened the evacuation of multiple homes, displaced wildlife, obliterated air quality, and stirred widespread panic.

In response to the spate of fires, officials have mandated a statewide burn ban until November 30. "Now is not the right time to be burning outdoors, and I urge everyone to heed our warnings as we continue to take the necessary precautions to keep all New Yorkers safe," Governor Kathy Hochul said of statewide precautions.

New York City has also banned outdoor grilling across the Big Apple amid the bone-dry conditions. "We're praying for rain," embattled Mayor Eric Adams told reporters huddled at the site of the brush fire. "We really need rain with all of these leaves, and dry ground, and trees." No one was injured in the Brooklyn blaze. Officials, who have been tight-lipped, are still probing the fire's cause. — Aljazeera

# Post-election violence in Mozambique concern for S Africa

JOHANNESBURG (AP): A deepening political and social crisis in Mozambique will top the agenda of a regional summit this week called after the result of Oct. 9 elections led to weeks of violent protests and prompted the losing candidate to dispute the outcome.

At least 30 people are reported to have died during the post-election violence which flared following the victory of the ruling Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (Frelimo) candidate Daniel Chapo. Venancio Mondlane, the independent candidate who came second with 20% of the national vote, has challenged the result and is calling for nationwide protests. International observers have cited irregularities in the election.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) is holding a summit from Nov. 16 to 20 in Harare to discuss the situation in Mozambique. Mozambique's disputed election result comes as several of its neighbors hold their own polls. In Botswana, the ruling party was removed from power after 58 years in Oct. 30 polling and a smooth transfer of power took place within days.

In May, the ruling party in South Africa lost its parliamentary majority for the first time since 1994 and within weeks had formed a unity government with opposition parties. Mauritius held elections on Nov. 10

in which the ruling party lost by a landslide. Namibia is expected to go to the polls later this month. The European Union's observer team has alleged irregularities in Mozambique's election, including the altering of some results.

Zimbabwe's 2023 elections were criticized by international observers over alleged irregularities. The European Union's Election Observation Mission said the pre-polling environment and election day fell short of regional and international standards. Mozambique, which gained independence from Portugal in 1975, is a crucial part of regional trade in Southern Africa, sharing borders with South Africa, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Eswatini. Instability in the country risks spilling over its border and creating problems for its neighbors, many of whom are dealing with the domestic challenges related to illegal migration.

South Africa closed its side of the Lebombo border that it shares with Mozambique in the wake of the recent protests. South Africa uses the Maputo harbor in Mozambique for some exports and the closure resulted in trucks transporting minerals to the harbor being stranded.

South Africa's freight and rail association estimated that the closure of the border cost the South African

economy at least 10 million rand (\$550,000) each day that the border is closed. The Minerals Council of South Africa estimates that 53% of the chrome ore and concentrate exported by South Africa in 2023 was exported through Maputo. Mozambique has an abundance of mineral resources and its 2010 discovery of natural gas is expected to reignite its economy as it looks to be more involved with its neighbors in the energy sector. Mozambique is still suffering from the effects of a 15-year civil war that ended in 1992 during which the leftist Frelimo fought against rebel movement Renamo. The Oct. 9 election was the country's first since 1994 to have no armed groups connected to any political party after a process to disarm militias. Mozambique has been fighting an Islamic State-affiliated group that has launched attacks on communities in the northern province of Cabo Delgado since 2017. Around 600,000 of the 1.3 million people who fled have since returned home, many to shattered communities where houses, markets, churches, schools and health facilities have been destroyed, the United Nations said earlier this year. Neighboring countries still host Mozambicans seeking work and economic opportunities, which means any further instability is likely to exacerbate further migration.

# Delhi shuts all primary schools as hazardous smog worsens

NEW DELHI (BBC): All primary schools in Delhi will close due to worsening air pollution, officials have announced. In a post on X, the Indian capital's chief minister, Atishi Marlena Singh, said classes will move online until further notice due to a thick smog that has enveloped the city.

Delhi and nearby cities are experiencing pollution levels that are deemed hazardous to people's health. On Thursday, fine particulate matter

in the air was more than 50 times what is considered safe by the World Health Organization (WHO). Delhi and northern states annually face smog during the winter due to a confluence of dropping temperatures, smoke, dust, low wind speeds, vehicle emissions and crop stubble burning. According to IQAir, a Swiss-based Air Quality Index (AQI) monitoring group, Delhi had on average 254 pieces of fine particulate matter - or PM 2.5 - per cubic metre of air on

Thursday. The WHO considers no more than 15 in a 24-hour period safe.

This is because fine particles can penetrate through lungs and affect organs. It can cause cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, while research shows it can also delay development in young children. Levels of larger particulate matter - PM 10 - reached an average of 495, more than 10 times the daily amount considered safe by the WHO.

# Maori haka in NZ parliament to protest at bill to reinterpret treaty

WELLINGTON (BBC): New Zealand's parliament was brought to a temporary halt by MPs performing a haka, amid anger over a controversial bill seeking to reinterpret the country's founding treaty with M'ori people.

Opposition party MP Hana-Rawhiti Maipi-Clarke began the traditional ceremonial group dance after being asked whether her party supported the bill, which faced its first vote on Thursday. At the same time, a h'koi - or peaceful protest march - organised by a M'ori rights group is continuing to make its way towards the capital, Wellington.

Thousands have already joined the 10-day march against the bill, which reached Auckland, having begun in the far north of New Zealand. The country is often considered a leader in indigenous rights, but opponents of the bill fear those same rights are being put at risk by this bill. Act, the political party that introduced the bill, argues there is a need to legally

define the principles of the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi, which has been fundamental to race relations in New Zealand. The core values of the treaty have, over time, been woven into New Zealand's laws in an effort to redress the wrong done to M'ori during colonisation.

But Act - a minor party in the ruling centre-right coalition - say this has resulted in the country being divided by race, and the bill will allow the treaty to be interpreted more fairly through parliament, rather than the courts. The party's leader, David Seymour, has dismissed opponents as wanting to "stir up" fear and division. Critics, however, say the legislation will divide the country and lead to the unravelling of much-needed support for many M'ori. The first reading passed on Thursday after a 30-minute break, backed by all parties from the ruling coalition. Maipi-Clarke was suspended from the house.

It is unlikely to pass a second read-

ing, as Act's coalition partners have indicated they will not support it. But this has not placated those worried about the bill, and its impact, with the hiko still making progress along its 1,000km (621-mile) route. In Auckland, it took an estimated 5,000 marchers two hours to cross the harbour bridge. Officials had closed two lanes, the New Zealand Herald reported, to allow them to continue along the route. Danielle Moreau, who is M'ori, walked over the Harbour Bridge with her two sons, Bobby and Teddy, and told the BBC she "was hoping it [the h'koi] would be big but it was much more epic than I expected".

"I marched to make the point that Te Tiriti [the Treaty of Waitangi] is very important to our national identity," said Winston Pond, who also took part in the march. "We are a multi-cultural society built on a bicultural base - something that cannot be altered." Juliet Tainui-Hernández, from the M'ori tribe

Ng'i Tahu, and her Puerto Rican partner Javier Hernández, brought their daughter Paloma to the h'koi. Ms Tainui-Hernández said those who turned out in support did so "for the respectful and inclusive nation we want Aotearoa [New Zealand] to be for our tamariki mokopuna - our children and grandchildren". Kiriana O'Connell, who is also M'ori, said that the current treaty principles were already a compromise for her people, and she would not support a "rewrite".

Act leader Seymour - who is also New Zealand's associate justice minister - argues that because the principles have never been properly defined legally, the courts "have been able to develop principles that have been used to justify actions that are contrary to the principle of equal rights". He says these include "ethnic quotas in public institutions" that go against the spirit of fairness for all New Zealanders. Prime Minister Christopher Luxon, however, has

called the bill "divisive" - despite being part of the same coalition.

Meanwhile, the Waitangi Tribunal, which was set up in 1975 to investigate alleged breaches of the Treaty of Waitangi, notes the bill "purposefully excluded any consultation with M'ori, breaching the principle of partnership, the Crown's good-faith obligations, and the Crown's duty to actively protect M'ori rights and interests". It also said that the principles of the bill misinterpreted the Treaty of Waitangi and that this "caused significant prejudice to M'ori".

The tabling of the Treaty Principles Bill comes following a series of measures introduced by the government that have affected M'ori. They include the closure of the M'ori Health Authority, which was set up under Jacinda Ardern's Labour government to help create health equity, and reprioritising English over M'ori when it comes to the official naming of government organisations, for

example. While roughly 18% of New Zealand's population consider themselves to be M'ori, according to the most recent census, many remain disadvantaged compared with the general population when assessed through markers such as health outcomes, household income, education levels and incarceration and mortality rates. There remains a seven-year gap in life expectancy.

The Treaty of Waitangi is an agreement between the British and many, but not all, M'ori tribes, which was signed in 1840. It is contentious as it was written in both English and M'ori - which had only been a spoken language until colonisation - and the two versions contain fundamental differences when it comes to issues such as sovereignty. While the treaty itself is not enshrined in law, its principles have been adopted over time into various pieces of legislation. The bill will now be sent to a select committee for a six-month public hearing process.



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# Toward a people centered digital future

As we look to the future, it's clear that artificial intelligence will play a central role in shaping our lives and driving economic growth. McKinsey and Company, a global management consulting firm, estimates that AI could generate up to \$680 billion for the telecom sector over the next 15-20 years and recent GSMA Intelligence research indicates that 81 percent of surveyed operators are testing generative AI solutions. Arguably the most disruptive technology since the dawn of the internet, AI holds the promise of significantly transforming the world, with both opportunities and risks. That's why the theme of this year's World Internet Conference Wuzhen Summit, which will be held between Nov 19 and 22, is critical: Embracing a People-Centered and AI-for-Good Digital Future - Building a Community with a Shared Future in Cyberspace.

Taking a sustainable and ethical approach toward the technology is crucial given understandable concerns around bias and privacy issues, with AI advancing rapidly across sectors like healthcare, education and environment. The summit provides an essential platform for discussion around the importance of setting a foundation of trust with responsible AI. With these considerations in mind, GSMA, a non-profit industry organization headquartered in London that represents the interests of mobile network operators worldwide, created the Responsible AI Maturity Roadmap. The roadmap aims to guide the telecom sector on the path to adopting AI ethically, prioritizing fairness, transparency and inclusivity. With this framework, we are helping operators use AI responsibly and build public trust while unleashing innovation.

The roadmap helps mobile operators evaluate and strengthen their AI practices to build a foundation of trust and responsibility. Industry leaders like Vodafone, BT, Singtel and Orange have already adopted the roadmap to ensure ethical AI use and alignment with community expectations. China has emerged as a major player in AI, thanks to big investments, strong government support and a booming tech landscape. China's New Generation Artificial Intelligence Development Plan, unveiled by the State Council in 2017, aims to position the country at the forefront of AI innovation by 2030, focusing on areas like smart cities and healthcare.

Companies like China Mobile, China Telecom and China Unicom are making huge strides in AI research and applications, investing significantly in computing and other latest technologies. These advancements are transforming public services, supply chains and healthcare delivery. China's collaborative approach between universities and businesses is fostering a dynamic environment for AI innovation, resulting in breakthroughs with global implications.

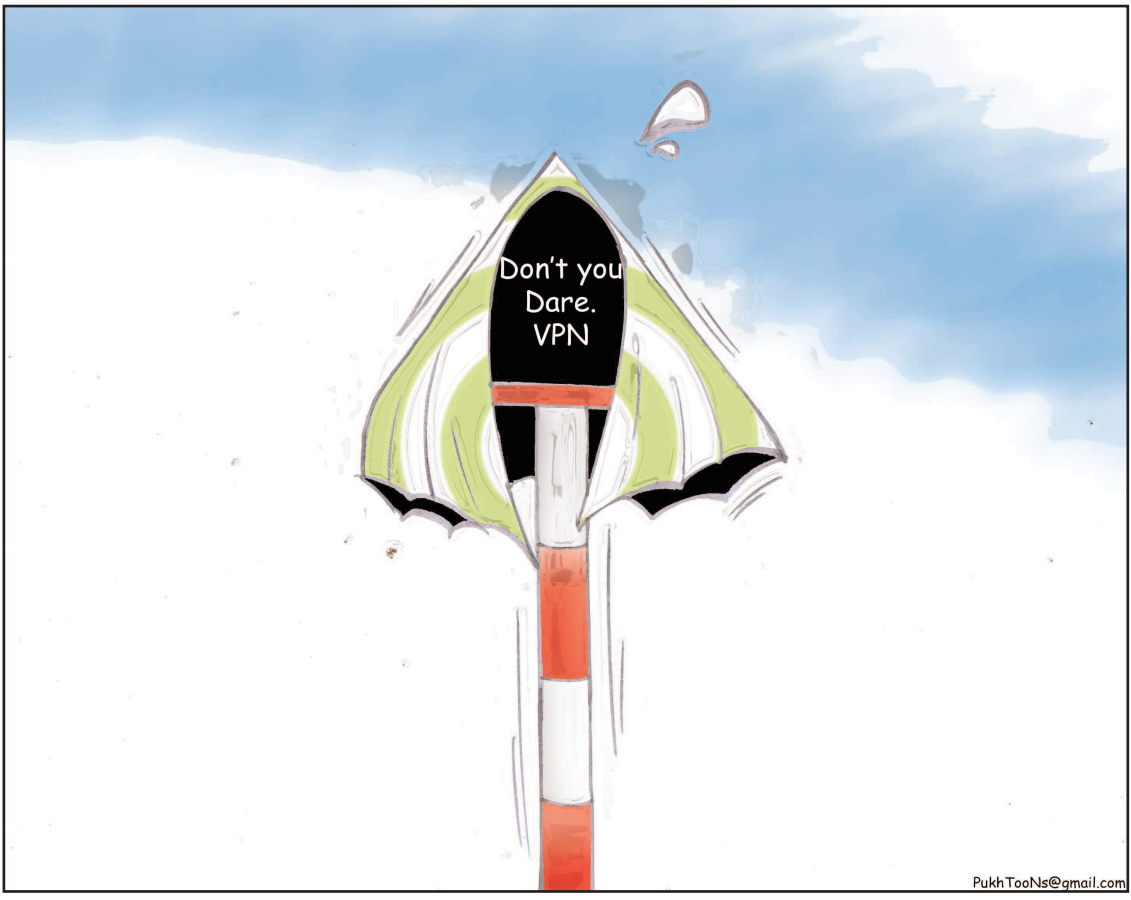
At the WIC Wuzhen Summit, we will also look forward to exploring with experts from China and around the world on how AI and digital tools can enhance productivity and connect markets. Initiatives like GSMA's Open Connect, also supported by Chinese telecom operators, link cloud providers and mobile operators through standardized APIs, and facilitate seamless connectivity to mobile networks. This integration helps businesses across the digital ecosystem launch new services and mobile apps by accessing the full functionality of 5G networks. By helping enterprises adopt advanced digital tools, we're paving the way for an inclusive, people-centered digital economy that can support all businesses. Our goal is to create a more connected world, where digital innovation translates into real economic growth and opportunity.

AI large-language models offer substantial potential for Chinese mobile operators, transforming sectors such as government, customer service and healthcare. Operators can drive efficiencies by enhancing customer service personalization and optimizing government services with data-driven insights. AI is not only enhancing user experience but also creating new revenue streams, positioning mobile operators as key players in this intelligent transformation. For example, in manufacturing, AI combined with 5G improves safety management, while in healthcare, it enables faster diagnostics. Moreover, education and tourism stand to benefit as well, with personalized learning and smart visitor experiences.

China's rapid development in AI highlights the potential impact of well-integrated innovation on communities. From urban planning to rural health, AI solutions are making a meaningful difference. The GSMA's partnerships in China aim to support more of these outcomes. By working together, we can learn from these initiatives and build a global framework for responsible AI that benefits everyone. The path to a people-centered digital future requires cooperation across borders and sectors, and addressing challenges like the digital divide. Responsible AI requires collective action. I will speak at the WIC Wuzhen Summit about how the digital economy and AI can drive global prosperity. Through open dialogue and knowledge sharing, we can create a digital economy that strengthens businesses while uplifting communities worldwide. Over the coming years, the GSMA will continue to champion AI innovations that foster inclusivity and social impact globally. By uniting around this vision, we can ensure that digital technology benefits all communities, empowering individuals and making a positive difference.

## Important Notice

The Frontier Post will not be responsible for the comments in the articles and letters. The Frontier Post requests the writers of articles and letters to please make sure that they write their email addresses and mention the names of the cities, towns, districts or tehsil of their residences at the bottom of their articles and letters.



# Trump taps old ally

Jeff Seldin

US President-elect Donald Trump is turning to an old ally and to an outsider seen by some as a disruptor to oversee American intelligence agencies when he begins his second term in office in January. Trump late Tuesday announced he planned to appoint his former director of national intelligence, John Ratcliffe, as director of the CIA, the country's premier spy agency.

In a second announcement late Wednesday, Trump said he would nominate former Democratic Representative Tulsi Gabbard to be director of national intelligence and oversee all 18 US intelligence agencies. Both nominees must be confirmed by the Republican-controlled Senate. Of the two picks, Trump's choice of Gabbard as his top intelligence official caught some lawmakers and former intelligence officials by surprise. Gabbard, a veteran with the US Army National Guard, served in Iraq and Kuwait, and later became the first Hindu elected to the House of Representatives, representing the state of Hawaii as a Democrat.

During her more than 20 years in the National Guard, Gabbard was awarded a combat medical badge, but has not held any senior leadership positions. Trump, who promised during his campaign to root out what he described as corruption in the intelligence agencies, praised Gabbard's approach. "I know Tulsi will bring the fearless spirit that has defined her illustrious career to our Intelligence Community, championing our Constitutional Rights, and securing Peace through Strength," he said in a statement.

However, she has taken controversial positions in the past that have drawn criticism from both Republicans and Democrats. In a social media video in March 2022, she alleged there were more than 25 US-funded biolabs in Ukraine "conducting research on dangerous pathogens," and called on the United States and its allies, as well as Russia and Ukraine, to implement a cease-fire to make sure the pathogens did not spread. There are 25+ US-funded biolabs in Ukraine which if breached would release & spread deadly pathogens to

US/world. We must take action now to prevent disaster.

Republican Senator Mitt Romney responded by chastising Gabbard, accusing her in a post of his own of "parroting false Russian propaganda." "Her treasonous lies may well cost

rity." While Trump went with an US intelligence outsider to serve as his lead intelligence official, he turned to an old ally to head up the country's premier spy agency.

Trump praised Ratcliffe as a "warrior for Truth and Honesty," and commended

*Not only is she ill-prepared and unqualified, but she trafficks in conspiracy theories and cozies up to dictators like Bashar al-Assad and [Russian President] Vladimir Putin," Spanberger wrote. "I am deeply concerned about what this nomination portends for our national security." While Trump went with an US intelligence outsider to serve as his lead intelligence official, he turned to an old ally to head up the country's premier spy agency.*

lives," he added. Tulsi Gabbard is parroting false Russian propaganda. Her treasonous lies may well cost lives. Days earlier, top US intelligence officials told lawmakers they were fighting influence operations directed by Russia, aimed at convincing audiences that Kyiv was pursuing biological weapons. Gabbard was also criticized in 2017 for traveling to Syria and meeting with President Bashar al-Assad, who stands accused of war crimes. She defended the trip, arguing it is necessary to meet with adversaries if "you are serious about pursuing peace."

Virginia Representative Abigail Spanberger, a former case officer with the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency and a Democrat, wrote on X late Wednesday that she was "appalled" by the nomination. "Not only is she ill-prepared and unqualified, but she trafficks in conspiracy theories and cozies up to dictators like Bashar al-Assad and [Russian President] Vladimir Putin," Spanberger wrote. "I am deeply concerned about what this nomination portends for our national secu-

him for "exposing fake Russian collusion," in part, by rejecting concerns expressed by dozens of former US intelligence officials about Russian meddling. "When 51 intelligence officials were lying about [President Joe Biden's son] Hunter Biden's laptop, there was one, John Ratcliffe, telling the truth to the American People," Trump said in a statement late Tuesday. Messages and other information from the younger Biden's laptop were provided to a New York newspaper in 2020, some of which were purported to show his dealings with foreign business partners in Ukraine, China and elsewhere. No evidence of impropriety by President Biden was ever established.

Ratcliffe, a former Texas congressman who served on the House Intelligence Committee, has long been an ardent Trump supporter. And like Gabbard, his nomination to lead the US intelligence community in August 2019, during Trump's first term, sparked controversy. Ratcliffe was quickly forced to withdraw his name from consideration after both Republican and Democratic lawmakers raised questions about his

credentials, focusing on allegations Ratcliffe had overstated his counterterrorism achievements as a federal prosecutor. At the time, some lawmakers also questioned his lack of experience dealing with US intelligence agencies.

But Trump nominated Ratcliffe for director of national intelligence again in February 2020.

During his confirmation hearing, Ratcliffe promised lawmakers he would deliver both the president and policymakers the "unvarnished truth," no matter what they wanted to hear, and he ultimately won confirmation three months later after a 49-44 vote in the Senate, relying solely on Republican support.

Shortly after being sworn in, he joined social media, becoming the first director of national intelligence to have a Twitter account (the platform now known as X). Ratcliffe then moved to declassify and release some intelligence regarding interactions between former Trump national security adviser Michael Flynn and Russian officials.

He slammed leaks to the media that alleged that Russia had offered bounties to Taliban fighters for targeting and killing US troops in Afghanistan - allegations that US defense and intelligence officials later said could not be corroborated. Ratcliffe also clashed with lawmakers, failing to appear before Congress for the annual Worldwide Threat Assessment hearings and ending in-person, all-member intelligence briefings on election security.

And he publicly argued with the then-chair of the House Intelligence Committee, Democratic Representative Adam Schiff, regarding Russia's role in meddling in US elections. In an opinion piece published in The Wall Street Journal before leaving office in January 2021, he described China as the most pressing threat to democracy and the West since World War II. Since leaving office, Ratcliffe has served as a co-chair for the Center for American Security at the America First Policy Institute. He co-authored a policy brief on the Russian invasion of Ukraine from October 2022, expressing support for a Ukrainian victory while backing an increased, US-led push for negotiations and de-escalation.

# Putin pulls from Stalin's playbook

Maria Vyushkova

As news of North Korean troops being sent to Russia to fight against Ukraine made global headlines, some sources claimed these troops were being trained at a military base in Ulan-Ude, Buryatia, to be sent to the Ukraine front line "disguised as Buryats" (since both Koreans and Buryats are Asians and ostensibly hard to tell apart).

Buryats are an Indigenous Siberian nation of Mongolic origin which is known to be significantly overrepresented both among Russia's invading forces in Ukraine and among the Russian-side casualties of the war. "Putin has negotiated that Koreans from the DPRK [North Korea] would fight in Ukraine under the guise of Buryats, the media writes. Another confirmation that anyone can be passed off as Buryats. 'Buryats,' unfortunately, is a collective image (of any Asian soldiers) in the context of this war," wrote Alexandra Garmazhapova, a prominent Buryat journalist and the president of the Free Buryatia Foundation.

A week later, the Free Buryatia Foundation published a cartoon where President Vladimir Putin instructs two Korean soldiers: "Korean Comrades, your task is to pretend to be Buryats pretending to be Donbas coal miners!" This references the fact that Buryat troops, along with other Russian forces, were deployed to the Donbas War under the guise of a "Donbas militia." "History repeats itself in strange ways," says Dr. Sayana Namsaraeva, a Buryat scholar and senior research associate at the Mongolia & Inner Asia Studies Unit at the University of Cambridge whose recent research work focuses on Buryat and other Soviet-Asian involvement in the 1950-1953 Korean War in which Buryats, Sakha, Tuva and other Soviet Asians were deployed to fight for North Korea in the Korean War under the guise of Chinese volunteers.

Indeed, one cannot help but notice the parallel between the two wars. On the other hand, the similarity between the covert Soviet participation in the Korean War and Russia's role in the Donbas War is also obvious, with ethnic Buryat troops being involved in both. Though the participation of Soviet troops in the Korean War has always been denied by the Soviet government and all Soviet soldiers involved in the conflict had to sign a non-disclosure statement, the situation changed in post-Soviet Russia. The involvement of the Soviet Asian soldiers in the Korean War was officially recognized, and their stories were told in local media in Buryatia, Sakha (Yakutia) and Tuva.

However, these testimonies attracted little attention, and Buryat involvement in the Korean War remains understudied and largely missing from the collective memory, its true scale still unknown. So why are Buryats being singled out? The republic is situated close to the Russia-North Korea border and has numerous military bases and a significant Asian population.

Though a minority (30% of the population) in their own region, Buryats still are one of the biggest Indigenous Siberian groups, second only to Sakha. Historically, Buryatia has one of the highest concentrations of military bases relative to its population. The above factors likely contributed to the role of

Buryatia in both the Korean War and Russia's war in Ukraine.

The region is struggling economically, which makes military service a competitive job option for local men. These two factors led to ethnic Buryats being overrepresented among contract soldiers in the Russian army by the beginning of the Russo-Ukrainian war in 2014, when troops from Buryatia were infamously deployed to Donbas, their Asian appearance blowing the cover of Russia's active military involvement in the conflict. The analysis of the obituaries of the Russian-side casualties shows that ethnic Buryats are significantly overrepresented among the Russian-side casualties of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. This likely results from the high per capita concentration of military bases in both Buryatia and the Zabaikalsky region and how Russia's military leadership has considered units from Buryatia to be expendable.

Moreover, in the Ukrainian public discourse, "Buryat" became a collective term for any Asian-looking Russian troops, no matter their actual ethnicity. Given that such Asian ethnicities as Tuva, Kazakhs and Altai are also overrepresented among the Russian invasion forces, Ukrainian media tend to significantly overestimate the scale of Buryat involvement in the war. This also led to stereotyped allegations that Buryats were responsible for war crimes such as the Bucha massacre. However, it has been proved beyond any reasonable doubt that it was the paratroopers from the Russian city of Pskov, almost exclusively ethnic Russians, who were responsible for the occupation and mass murder of Ukrainian civilians in that city. Nevertheless, the "Buryats in Bucha" myth persists, and the myth of the "bloodthirsty Buryat savage" has been spread by such prominent public figures as Pope Francis.

Given all the above, it is unsurprising that Putin and his generals may try to pass the North Korean troops for Buryats, even though their alleged numbers may exceed the total number of ethnic Buryat soldiers ever involved in this war. This may help the Russian side conceal the true scale of North Korean participation in the war. According to a study published by iStories and the Conflict Intelligence Team in August, the 2023-early 2024 military recruitment campaign in Buryatia failed to provide as many soldiers as had been expected. The high death toll among the contract soldiers who were in the military as of February 2022, along with disproportionate mobilization in September-October 2022, resulted in much fewer people still willing to join the army, even with the promise of incredibly generous wages compared to the region's median income. So the North Korean troops probably are, in a sense, a "replacement" that fills in this shortage of recruits from Buryatia.

To me, as an ethnic Buryat, both stories - the Buryat soldiers deployed to the Korean War by Stalin, and the North Korean troops being sent to fight against Ukraine disguised as "Buryats" - are actually two episodes of the same story: an Indigenous minority being exploited in imperial wars by an imperial power. Not just using Buryat men as cannon fodder for those wars, but also exploiting our name and identity to cover up its true actions.

The Moscow Times

# China tries to smooth ties with EU

William Yang

at the European Council on Foreign Relations.

"Europe is becoming increasingly aware of the negative impact of China's foreign and industrial policy on the single market and the security of NATO's Eastern flank," she told VOA in a written response. On November 9, the deputy head of European affairs at the Chinese Foreign Ministry, Cao Lei, said that because Trump's victory could be "the turning point of our times," the EU and China should repair divisions and improve bilateral relations.

"No one wants to return to the law of the jungle, no one wants to go back to the era of confrontation and the Cold War, and no one wants to return to unilateral hegemony. This is the backdrop that China-EU relations are facing," he said at the launch of the China Think-Tank Network on Europe at Beijing Foreign Studies University. Some Chinese

analysts say the two should restore trust because Europe is more important for China than the United States.

"With Trump returning to the White House, an enhanced China-Europe cooperation will be beneficial for both sides to address [challenges] at the onset of a new era of uncertainties in the world," Feng Zhongping, the head of European studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, a Chinese government-affiliated think tank, said at the same event. Meanwhile, Chinese state media outlets are urging the EU to adopt a "pragmatic approach" to cooperating with China after the bloc decided to increase tariffs on electric vehicles imported from China to as much as 45.3% in October.

"A hardline economic and trade policy stance toward China will only further restrict the EU's maneuvering space in economic cooperation, which will, in turn, exacerbate the EU's economic difficulties," China's state-run tabloid Global Times wrote in an opinion piece on Wednesday. Those remarks come amid rising trade tension between China and the EU. In response to the bloc's tariffs against Chinese EVs, China announced Monday that it will start imposing temporary anti-dumping measures against imported European brandies on November 15.

While the EU and China both claim to have made some progress in the ongoing negotiation to address the EV tariffs last week, Bloomberg reported on Monday that the bloc sees little prospect of a quick deal. Experts say while China hopes to stabilize trade relations with the EU

as it prepares for potential tariffs that Trump has vowed to impose on Chinese products once he takes office, Brussels is unlikely to halt its efforts to rebalance trade relations with China.

"Some actors are convinced that Beijing should not be further 'antagonized' and that China's geographic distance from Europe makes it less of a threat," she told VOA, adding that Beijing will try to exploit this narrative. Other experts add that with the security threat posed by Russia, European countries will likely put more effort into maintaining their close alliance with the US rather than trying to adjust the bloc's foreign policy approach toward China.

"The common denominator is that in the European Commission, security issues now seem to take the driving seat so it's hard to imagine Europe not putting a lot of effort

into maintaining the transatlantic alliance, and it will be surprising if the EU takes a united front to prioritize relations with China," Sari Arho Havren, an associate fellow at the Royal United Services Institute, told VOA by phone. While European analysts say the effect of China's attempt to weaken the trans-Atlantic relationship may be limited, some Chinese experts say if Trump imposes high tariffs against products from China and European countries, Beijing and Brussels may find more common ground.

"I think Trump would impose tariffs against both China and the EU, so this may provide both sides an opportunity to reconcile the bilateral relationship," Zhou Bo, a senior fellow at the Center for International Security and Strategy at Tsinghua University in China, told VOA by phone.

VOA



# Taiwan is fast becoming a top destination for outdoor adventure

**MORE than 160 peaks over 3,000 meters (9,800 feet), hiking trails blazed by Indigenous people thousands of years ago, remarkable national parks and forests, and epic surf churned up by waves that roll unimpeded across the entire Pacific. That may sound like Chile, New Zealand or even California. But rather than one of the more obvious outdoor wellness and adventure hubs, it's actually Taiwan. Nowadays, this big island packs a lot of punch for a place that's around the same size as Belgium or Massachusetts.**

Topping it off, Taiwan also offers a post-adrenaline-rush opportunity to chill out, sleep in climate-controlled comfort, recharge your physical and mental batteries, and dive into gourmet cuisine at upscale lodges and resorts in national parks and scenic areas. "Several factors have contributed to the rapid growth of outdoor sports in Taiwan," says Kate Chen of the Taiwan Tourism Administration. "The diverse landscapes offer ideal settings for a wide range of adventure sports and the compact size of the island makes it easy to access destinations within a few hours, making exploration convenient for visitors."

The pandemic was a major turning point, says Michael McCreesh, founder of Taiwan Outdoors, which offers adventure tours, and the ParkBus Taiwan city-to-wilderness shuttle service. "The borders were closed but you could travel domestically," he says. "There was a huge spike in young adults wanting to go hiking or cycling." But it's not just locals discovering the island's outdoor opportunities. Taiwan's wide new world is also easy for interna-

tional visitors to tap into. Wilderness camping and backpacking are possible but still relatively rare in Taiwan. Not so when it comes to luxuriating at remote lodges and resorts in amazing locations.

Deep down in Taroko Gorge, Silks Place Taroko resort offers five-star comfort, cuisine and amenities like a spa with health and beauty treatments, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, morning yoga sessions and even a kids club. Yet nature is close at hand, including Taroko highlights like the Baiyang Trail with its tunnels and waterfalls, and the path that leads to the multi-storied Hsiang-Te Pagoda. (The resort is slated to reopen early next year following the repair of damage sustained during Typhoon Krathon.) Meanwhile, The Lalu resort sits along the shoreline of Sun Moon Lake National Scenic Area in the central highlands. The chic lakeview suites feature private balconies with panoramic views of the water and mountains, and fireplaces to take the edge off the winter chill. Right outside the hotel are hiking and biking paths. The 30-kilometer (18-mile) bike trail around the lake is "ranked as one of the top 10 cycling routes around the world," says Chen.

For those in search of a tougher trek, The Lalu can arrange transportation to trailheads for the Shuishhe Great Mountain Nature Trail or the Maolan Mountain Trail. It's also easy to access the culture, cuisine and handicrafts of the Thao and Bunun Indigenous peoples who have called the Sun Moon region home for thousands of years. You don't even have to venture far from Taipei to experience nature. Volando Urai Spring Spa

& Resort, in the hot springs-filled Wulai District of the Nanshi River valley, lies less than an hour's drive from the city's downtown area.

A member of the Relais & Châteaux group, the resort offers top-notch French and Chinese restaurants, as well as a spa that blends Western and Eastern treatments, and private hot spring bathroom rooms with river views. Premium suites open onto private gardens with a swimming pool and a rooftop terrace. There are dozens of hiking options near the Volando Urai, from the switchbacks up to the lofty Baoqing Temple and the scenic trails of the Neidong Forest Recreation Area, to entire day treks in the Tonghou River Valley, with its waterfalls and jungle-like ambiance. Other places that combine nature and upscale nurture include the Villa 32 luxury boutique hotel and hot spring resort in Beitou near the north coast; and Mudanwan Villa near Kenting National Park on the south coast.

"Taipingshan and Alishan are my favorite National Forest Recreation Areas," says Kembel. "Both are former logging areas with easy walking trails and heritage railway lines through ancient, mist-shrouded hino-ki forests." While hiking and biking may be the easiest ways to access outdoor Taiwan, the island is also fertile ground for scuba diving and snorkeling, rock climbing and sea kayaking, and many other energetic pursuits. Taiwan's 29 Indigenous groups - people who inhabited the island before the arrival of the first mainland Chinese settlers - have become an important part of the hiking scene. Many of the trails cross their traditional territories and guided multiday

treks (like those offered by Taiwan Outdoors) often overnight in remote tribal villages. Chen recommends the Alangyi Historic Trail: "It runs along one of Taiwan's last undeveloped seashores, where low altitude coastal forest is well preserved. The trail served as a commute route for Indigenous tribes for hundreds of years. Hiking along the trail, visitors reach a pebble stone beach and have breathtaking views of the Pacific."

For really avid hikers, the crown jewel of Taiwan trekking is the Baiyue (100 Peaks Challenge), which entails summiting 3,000-meter mountains considered the island's most historic, scenic or dramatic. There's also the Xiao Baiyue (100 Minor Peaks Challenge) to knock off the top urban and suburban trails. Cycling is a close second when it comes to Taiwan's most popular outdoor sport but mountain biking is relatively new. For the time being, Yetopia in east coast Yilan County offers the island's only MTB trail network. But road cycling is widespread, and with paved shoulders, many of the rural highways and byways have been adapted for biking.

The east coast also boasts the island's best surfing conditions. And maybe best of all, there aren't a lot of surfers competing for the best waves. Based in Hualien City, Taiwan Surf Travel puts together packages that include accommodation, meals, gear and transportation to some of the best surf spots. Hualien City is also the jumping-off point for whitewater rafting down the rapid-strewn Xiuguluan River. A guided trip takes three-to-four hours, usually with a halfway stop at the Amis aboriginal village.

CNN

# Sino-US tech ties need deepening, not ‘decoupling’

**WITH voters in the United States electing a new president, speculation on the trajectory Sino-US relations will take, particularly in the realm of technology, has increased. The new US president, with ample business experience and fewer political constraints, has the opportunity to shift away from the current administration's trial-and-error approach and adopt a more rational and pragmatic stance on China.**

During the election campaign, the president-elect laced his speeches with anti-China rhetoric and accusations, and proposed to take measures that could impede bilateral relations in high-tech. However, it is important to understand that campaign rhetoric in the US often differs from the actual decisions taken by the government - an inherent feature of US electoral politics. Hopefully, the interests of the American people should guide the White House policies.

Ideally, the right thing to do for the new administration would be to abandon the emotion-driven high-tech policy toward China. Both empirical evidence and logical reasoning indicate that the ongoing restrictions on technological exchanges between the two sides are detrimental to not only China but the United States as well.

A key assumption underpinning US restrictions on technology exchanges is that China's technological progress poses a threat to the US' high-tech sector. Such assumptions, however, do not hold up to reason or scrutiny. The complementary and mutually beneficial aspects of technological research and exchanges, academic collaboration, patent sharing and intellectual property rights trade far outweigh

the blind competition and confrontation elements.

China has the highest number of doctoral candidates in the world. As a matter of fact, US multinational corporations have reaped substantial benefits from their investments and research and development operations in China, and leveraged China's human resources to acquire valuable intellectual property.

The growth of China's high-tech manufacturing is closely related to its integration with the global value chain led by the US. A significant part of China's high-tech exports involves processing, which requires substantial imports of components and intermediate goods - many of which come from the US.

Therefore, claims that China's technological development is a threat to the US are largely politically motivated, especially because evidence shows that US policies aimed at "decoupling" and "de-risking" from the Chinese economy have not yielded the intended results. For China, these policies may have caused short-term disruptions in its industry and supply chains, but in the ultimate analysis, they have fostered alternatives, by prompting the country to expedite original and innovative R&D. Besides, Washington's policies have compelled some US companies to shift their manufacturing and other units from China to the US or other countries.

Interestingly, the US International Trade Commission has said that the cost of imposing extra tariffs on Chinese products under the provisions of Section 232 and Section 301 of the US Trade Act of 1974 is being passed down to US businesses and consumers. Many US experts have questioned the wisdom of decoupling the US

and Chinese economies, despite the chances of the two sides reaching a consensus on export control policies becoming increasingly difficult.

Also, the US' approach has inadvertently increased the burden on many global companies and consumers. For instance, US restrictions on exporting semiconductors to China have disrupted the global semiconductor supply chain, forcing companies in Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Netherlands and other economies to navigate between increased operational costs and reduced market demand, potentially leading to overcapacity in advanced countries' chip industries.

Additionally, the US is using its "long-arm jurisdiction" and political pressure to force third-country companies to join the technological blockade bloc against China, harming their interests. The inconsistency between the US' self-proclaimed commitment to free market and fair competition and its frequent use of non-market, unjust policies to target other countries has eroded the country's credibility and sowed distrust between the US-led West and developing countries.

Improving China-US tech relations is essential not only for the mutual interests of the two sides but also to invigorate economic globalization. The new US administration, therefore, should adopt a pragmatic and flexible approach to its technology policy toward China, lift the export controls and extra tariffs on Chinese products, promote cooperation in high-tech and expand personnel exchanges. And the two countries should enhance communication and collaboration, work together to steer bilateral relations toward a cooperative and mutually beneficial future.

# Trump’s hawkish new team suggests all is not lost for Ukraine

**WHEN Donald Trump was elected, there was almost as much jubilation in Moscow as there was in Mar-a-Lago. "Kamala is finished," said Dmitry Medvedev, now a senior Kremlin official. "Let her keep cackling infectiously. The objectives of the Special Military Operation remain unchanged and will be achieved." Leonid Slutsky, a senior Duma parliamentarian, predicted that Volodymyr Zelensky's downfall will "happen in a matter of months, if not days". They thought that Trump's election meant an exhausted West will now abandon Ukraine.**

Now, this is looking far less clear. Among his flurry of nominations this week we see Elise Stefanik for the United Nations, Marco Rubio for Secretary of State and Mike Waltz for National Security Adviser. All are believers in America's role in shaping the world. All are derided as hawks by their critics. And while none have opposed Trump's strategy of brokering a deal in Ukraine, they are unlikely to do so on terms that the Kremlin now seems to expect.

It's not hard to see why there is so much bullishness in Moscow. Rather than being crippled by sanctions, Russia's economy has become one of the fastest-growing in the world. A war economy has pushed unemployment to historic lows and sent salaries skyrocketing. Workers are spending, which in turn stokes growth even more. The World Bank ended up having to reclassify Russia as a "high income" country: one which has now overtaken Germany and Japan to rank as the world's fourth-largest economy. This helps its war machine: Putin is spending an estimated \$170

in Ukraine for every \$100 spent by Zelensky and his allies. The Kremlin hasn't even needed to resort to conscription: it can afford to offer new recruits golden handshakes of up to £24,000, more than twice the average annual salary. Russian casualties are high - estimates range from 1,200 to 1,900 killed or injured every day - but the Kremlin has shown that its autocratic model and repression of critics allows it to withstand such losses.

Ukraine's lines have been thinned by casualties and, lately, desertion. In the summer, parliament passed a law forgiving first-time deserters - with calamitous effect, as soldiers fled positions they regarded as untenable. Russia is closing in on Kurakhove in Donetsk, having blown up a nearby dam earlier this week so the resulting flood would clear away defenders. Ukraine's own conquests in the Kursk region of Russia, captured for leverage in any negotiation, are under attack. This explains the hubristic tone of public debate in Russia: the television talk shows, Telegram social media and the various online commentators. All propaganda, of one kind or another, but not so far from popular opinion. "The West has realised that it is small. Europe puffed out its chest for so long, now its rear is exposed," said Vladimir Solovyov, one of Russia's more hawkish television commentators, recently. "No plan works. Where is the global dominance? They lost everything in Afghanistan. In Ukraine, nothing is working out."

"Why do we, as Russians, need negotiations right now?," asks Alexander Sladkov, Russia's most popular military blogger. Freezing

the conflict now may be a bad deal, he says: a better settlement could be there with more fighting. "If we're going to divide Ukraine, it should be along the Dnieper River, so that Kyiv returns to Russia." A poll by Levada, the closest Russia has to an independent polling company, found the war is still backed by 75 per cent of Russians.

"Are we ready to negotiate?" asked Putin two months ago. "We have never refused to do so. But not based on some ephemeral demands: instead on documents agreed in Istanbul." This means his demands that Ukraine gives up four of its partly-occupied regions, declares neutrality, shrinks its army strength to a desultory 50,000 and lets Moscow veto its purchase of any Western arms. This would, in effect, reduce Ukraine to a Belarus-style puppet state. For good measure, Putin wants an end to sanctions. Trump has not said much about Ukraine, other than to denounce Zelensky as a hustler who specialises in relieving American taxpayers of their money. He says he'd do a deal to end the war "on day one", but hasn't said how. The people he has just appointed, however, have said more.

Rubio says he wants a deal that's "favourable to Ukraine," which he defines as retaining sovereignty and being in no way a puppet state. This would suggest being free, for example, to choose its own defence alliances. Like JD Vance, Rubio voted against the last US aid package to Ukraine, saying that Europe should bear more of the cost for its own defence. But he's also no isolationist - and is against a settlement

that can be seen as an American defeat.

Waltz is a former US special forces officer who was appalled at Biden's withdrawal from Afghanistan and the message it sent about American resolve. He'll be mindful that a bad Ukraine deal could be Trump's equivalent of the retreat from Kabul. Before the election, Waltz was discussing another idea: giving Ukraine permission to use American missiles to strike certain targets (oil refineries, airfields, troop clusters) deep inside Russia.

This would be quite a break from Joe Biden, who banned Ukraine from such strikes. Trump may say he won't send more aid, but will let Zelensky do whatever he likes if Putin won't come to the negotiating table. Kyiv is unlikely to need much encouragement to take him up on such an offer.

So the contours of a Trump deal start to become visible. It would be a frozen conflict, where Russia's conquests aren't accepted by Ukraine but both sides agree to a ceasefire. Kyiv would agree if left free to make its own defence treaties with allies. Not Nato membership (which was always a bit of a stretch) but something that does not leave Ukraine exposed if Russia rearms then comes back to finish the job. Such a deal is far from what Zelensky wants - and from what Ukraine deserves. But it's also far from the worst-case scenario where an isolationist president walks away and leaves Ukraine to suffer what it must. As ever with Trump, it's hard to discern what method - if any - lies in his madness. But the rise of Rubio and Waltz - combined with a Senate with a pro-Kyiv majority - suggest that there may be hope for Ukraine yet.

The Telegraph

# Gray’s final departure marks moment that Starmer project gets serious

**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 clumsily 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.

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 gov-

ernment'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 driven by 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.

Polly Toynbee

**THAT is a low blow, health secretary. On a matter of life, death and personal freedom, the debate should be elevated above this. Wes Streeting cheapens discussion on the right to die by suggesting there is no money to pay for a doctor to hand a dying patient the lethal dose they request. Disingenuously, he suggests that finding the funding would mean cuts to other services.**

It would have "resource implications" that would "come at the expense of other choices". He made this unevicenced assertion before asking his department to look at any possible costs that implementing the legislation could incur. If he really wants to bring in the crude question of cash, I assume his department will assess savings in bed-days and staff time from those who choose to depart intensive end-of-life care a little sooner.

In two weeks' time, parliament will vote on Kim Leadbeater's assisted dying bill. The process would require two doctors to sign witnessed statements from a mentally competent patient who has been diagnosed as likely to die within six months. Then the application must be heard by a high court judge, who can question doctor or patient. Then there must be a 14-day pause before the patient self-administers life-ending medication. It is such a long process that many may die waiting in agony.

A House of Commons full of new young Labour MPs, progressive by nature and more in touch with the huge majority of the public that has long backed the right to die, will surely pass this law, won't it? The largest poll on assisted dying showed 75% of respondents supported a change in the law, with a majority in every constituency in Great Britain: surely Labour MPs will back it too?

Probably, but not certainly. The word in Westminster is that Streeting's abrupt retreat into opposition has set many of them wavering. His outright campaigning contradicts the instruction sent to all ministers by the cabinet secretary on how to conduct themselves on a free-vote issue. "Though ministers need not resil-

from previously stated views when directly asked about them, they should exercise discretion and should not take part in the public debate." For the health secretary to threaten that passing this law might mean treatments being denied to others is up there in the dishonesty levels with that "£350m a week for the NHS" Brexit campaign promise.

Every Labour government brings breakthroughs in personal freedoms: abortion, gay rights, civil partnerships, abolishing the death penalty, censorship and more. Only Labour governments dare implement "nanny" public health laws that save untold numbers of lives - compulsory seat belts for drivers, the 70mph speed limit and a ban on indoor smoking, all facing vociferous rightwing opposition, but all popular.

The right to escape the last stages of dying if suffering is unbearable is the freedom this Labour government is being asked to bring to England and Wales. If it wobbles, it will be another decade at least before any bill would try again, and it's highly unlikely that any future Tory majority would do this. It's now or never. Ducking out would be an act of cowardice. Keir Starmer promised Esther Rantzen, who is dying of lung cancer, that he would ensure a free vote on the issue. As director of public prosecutions, his guidelines made the prosecution of anyone assisting a suicide less likely. But now he seems to be stepping back, claiming he hasn't yet made up his mind on assisted dying. Or maybe he's just obeying the cabinet instructions that Streeting flouts.

The mostly (though not solely) religious lobbies campaigning against the bill include church leaders, though not their congregations - 69% of Christians are in favour of assisted dying. The Care Not Killing alliance is the main umbrella group for the opposition, and is composed largely of the religious. Not Dead Yet speaks for some disabled people, but according to one poll, 78% of people with disabilities support assisted dying. Opponents argue that the Leadbeater bill's five-hour debate in the Commons

will be too short - as if the whole country hadn't been debating this for years, as bill after bill failed in the Tory era.

Opponents manage to make it sound as if they have far more support than they do from those who work in palliative care and hospice services. But Mark Jarman-Howe, the chief executive of St Helena hospice in Colchester and a strong advocate for the Leadbeater bill, told me that while most in the sector stay neutral in public, a "silent majority" agreed with him. "Those opposed are a very vocal minority," he said. "Everyone sees horrible deaths, such as terminal bleeding or fungating tumours caused by cancer."

He identifies a "double standard" in palliative care, where doctors may hasten a patient's death by sedating them, so long as death is not the purpose of the sedation. "It's ethically dodgy," he said of this practice. "It's not monitored, [there is] no scrutiny. Nor is it [monitored] when people choose to refuse food or liquids, but that can lead to days of pain and torment for them and their family."

He is indignant at Streeting using the shortage of palliative care in some places as an excuse for refusing the right to die. "Yes, it is underfunded," he said, claiming that it receives far less money per patient than the rest of the NHS. The service was "teetering as numbers of deaths are rising", he said. But even the best care, he added, could not prevent some horrific deaths.

The bill's conditions are stricter than any law in other countries with a right to die. Personally, I think it's been drawn far too tightly, excluding many in intolerable suffering with degenerative diseases, but if there is wobbling even on this bill, there is probably no chance of a better one. After studying the phenomenal 40 pages of safeguards and conditions accompanying the bill, I believe there is no excuse for Labour MPs to dither. Let each of them speak up now. This is not just for the few dying horribly: everyone will die, and everyone who ever thinks about what kind of death they could face deserves to know they can go when they choose at the end.

The Guardian





# Envoy meets investment bankers, IT professionals, business leaders in NY

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States (US), Rizwan Saeed Sheikh, on Saturday held an interactive meeting with New York-based investment bankers, IT professionals, and business leaders at the Consulate General of Pakistan in New York.

The Consul General, Aamir Ahmed Atozai, and Trade and Investment Counsellor, Adnan Mahmood Awan, were also in attendance, according to a press release received here from New York.

Ambassador Sheikh emphasized Pakistan's commitment to fostering a business-friendly environment, underscoring the pivotal role of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) in promoting investment.

He elaborated on Pakistan's liberal investment policies, its strategic geographic position as a gateway to South and Central Asia, and the advantages of its GSP+ status in the European Union and Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with China.

The Ambassador encouraged New York-based busi-

nesses to explore Pakistan as a strategic base for expanding operations in the region. During the interactive session, participants expressed strong interest in exploring investment opportunities in Pakistan while highlighting challenges faced in their business dealings.

The envoy assured them of dedicated support from the Embassy and Consulate, offering to facilitate connections with relevant partners and stakeholders in Pakistan.

Earlier, the Trade and Investment Counsellor briefed the participants on lucrative investment opportunities in Pakistan, covering key sectors including IT, agriculture, mining, and tourism. He highlighted the numerous incentives offered by the Government of Pakistan to attract foreign investment. The meeting concluded with a mutual commitment to make such interactions a regular feature to strengthen economic ties and collaboration between Pakistan and US.

**Pak envoy, New York Chamber of Commerce President discuss enhancing of bilateral trade:** The Ambassador of Pakistan to

the United States (US), Rizwan Saeed Sheikh, on Saturday met with Mr Mark Jaffe, President and CEO of the Greater New York Chamber of Commerce, to discuss initiatives aimed at enhancing bilateral trade and investment between Pakistan and New York.

The Ambassador appreciated the Chamber's ongoing collaboration with the Consulate General of Pakistan in New York and thanked Mr Jaffe for his support and interest in Pakistan's recent 5th International Textile and Leather Exhibition (TEXPO) 2024, held in Karachi last month.

He also invited the Chamber to participate in the upcoming 4th Engineering and Healthcare Show scheduled to take place in Lahore in April 2025, according to a press release received here from New York.

During the meeting, the Ambassador highlighted the pivotal role of Pakistan's Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) in fostering investment opportunities across multiple sectors.

He underscored the

Pakistan's liberal investment regime, strategic geographic location, and incentives for foreign investors, emphasizing the benefits for New York businesses seeking to expand their footprint in South and Central Asia.

He noted that Pakistan's Generalized System of Preferences Plus (GSP+) status in the EU and Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with China provide added advantages for investors.

Mr Jaffe expressed strong interest in Pakistan's textile, leather, surgical, and IT sectors. He outlined the Chamber's efforts to promote trade and investment between New York and Pakistan.

He assured his commitment to disseminating information about Pakistan's upcoming trade events to the Chamber's extensive network.

Both sides concluded the meeting with a shared resolve to strengthen collaboration between the Chamber and the Consulate, aiming to further promote trade ties between New York and Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: FPCCI Federal Capital Standing Committee on Corporate and Multinational Companies Affairs lead by Convener Muhammad Shafique Swati, Deputy Convener Dr. Hayam Qayyum alongwith members of Committee submitting their report to Acting President FPCCI Ms. Qurrat ul Ain.

## Standing Committee submit report F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: FPCCI Federal Capital Standing Committee on Corporate and Multinational Companies Affairs lead by Convener Muhammad Shafique Swati, Deputy Convener Dr. Hayam Qayyum and other members of committee submitted their report to Ms. Qurrat ul Ain, Acting President FPCCI, alongside also to Mr. Tariq Jadoon VP FPCCI and Mr. Malik Sohail Hussain Chairman Coordination, having suggestions and recommendations compiled after their 2nd Meeting of Committee, Ms. President duly acknowledged and praised the work of the committee and enforced her full support for the good work.

Members Ms. Ayesha Khan, Raja Ishfaq Abbasi, Ch. Usman Basra, Syed Sadat Hussain Shah, Ch. Nawaz Basra, Agha Amjad, Muhammad Shahid and Ms. Samina Fazil group leader ICCI were also present there.

## Gold prices dip by Rs300

ISLAMABAD (APP): The price of 24 karat per tola gold decreased by Rs300 and was sold at Rs267,400 on Saturday against its sale at Rs267,700, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also went down by Rs258 to Rs229,252 from Rs229,510 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat gold decreased to Rs210,148 from Rs210,384.

The price of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs.3250 and Rs.2,786 respectively. The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$3 to \$2,562 from \$2,565, the Association reported.

# SBP to celebrate Women Entrepreneurship Day

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) will celebrate Women Entrepreneurship Day (WED) on November 19, 2024, across Pakistan through its 16 field offices. The key event will be held at SBP Karachi with a keynote address by Governor SBP Mr. Jameel Ahmad. The event is expected to bring together top officials from banks, non-bank institutions, and working women's associations to recognize the significant contributions of women entrepreneurs to the economy.

As part of the preparation for Women Entrepreneurship Day, SBP has been undertaking a range of activities in collaboration with its stakeholders, since

July 2024, to foster an enabling environment for women-led businesses. These activities-including workshops, awareness campaigns, and mentorship programs-aimed to inform women about available financing options and provide guidance to support their entrepreneurial journey. Through these efforts, SBP-BSC offices have engaged with over 1,000 women entrepreneurs nationwide.

The main ceremony at SBP Karachi will include conferring awards to women-led businesses across various categories, e.g., Innovative Leadership, Social Impact, Sustainability Champion, and Resilience, acknowledging their remarkable achievements in the entrepreneurial

landscape. Additionally, the winners of the Business Idea Competition will also be announced during the event whereas recognition awards will be conferred to high-performing banks that have consistently extended loans to female borrowers.

WED is a global initiative aimed at acknowledging and supporting women who drive innovation, create jobs, and significantly contribute to economic growth.

Despite their crucial role, a sizeable section of women faces impediments in accessing finance and business opportunities. Through this celebration, SBP and its partners seek to inspire more women to pursue entrepreneurship and succeed in today's competitive environment.

# Mist fans proposed to rein in smog

FAISALABAD (APP): The Faisalabad Think Tank has proposed installation of mist fans on electric polls along the Rakh Branch Canal in collaboration with the private sector to rein in the unbridled menace of smog.

Engineer Ahmad Hassan, former Vice President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI), expressed concern that smog had been disrupting normal life for the last many years during the winter season but no tangible proposal surfaced to control it.

He said that the government tried to contain it through costly experiments of artificial rain but it was not a permanent solution to the environmental phenomenon.

He suggested a compre-

hensive business plan which could be implemented under public-private partnership mode to permanently settle this issue in addition to utilizing it during summer to bring down the temperature.

He said that business and commercial houses along the canal expressway could be motivated to fund and to own this project by utilizing water from the canal and electricity already available to the streetlight system of Faisalabad Development Authority (FDA) in addition to its repair and maintenance.

"This system can be gradually converted to solar energy provided the police take responsibility to protect it and bear expenses in case of theft or intentional wear and tear of the system", he said and added

that initially it could be installed and made operational in front of willing business houses.

He further said that its scope could be further expanded to other areas in collaboration with civil society and environmentalists. He said that environment-friendly elements and organizations could be identified and motivated in collaboration with the Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) to participate in this project voluntarily.

A memorandum of understanding should also be inked clearly defining the responsibilities of district administration, police, FDA and irrigation department to keep this project operational on a permanent and sustained basis, he added.

# Saudi Arabia's official reserves reach \$457 billion, up 4 per cent

RIYADH (Arab News): Saudi Arabia's official reserve assets reached SR1.71 trillion (\$456.97 billion) in September, marking a 4 percent increase year-on-year, according to new data.

Figures released by the Saudi Central Bank, known as SAMA, show these holdings include monetary gold, special drawing rights, the International Monetary Fund's reserve position, and foreign reserves.

The latter, comprising currency and deposits abroad as well as investments in foreign securities,

made up 94.5 percent of the total, amounting to SR1.62 trillion in September. This category grew 4.11 percent during this period.

September data indicated that special drawing rights rose to SR79.86 billion, marking a 4.18 percent increase and reaching the highest level in two and a half years. SDRs now account for 4.66 percent of Saudi Arabia's total reserves.

Created by the IMF to supplement member countries' official reserves, SDRs derive their value

from a basket of major currencies, including the US dollar, euro, Chinese yuan, Japanese yen, and British pound sterling. They can be exchanged among governments for freely usable currencies when needed.

SDRs provide additional liquidity, stabilize exchange rates, act as a unit of account, and facilitate international trade and financial stability.

The IMF reserve position totaled around SR12.64 billion, but decreased by 11.45 percent during this period. This category

represents the amount a country can draw from the IMF without conditions.

Saudi Arabia's official reserves have been a fundamental pillar of the nation's economic stability and are closely tied to its strategic investments in foreign securities.

The Kingdom's reserves include an extensive portfolio of foreign assets, diversified across currencies and geographies, ensuring the country has a robust financial buffer against global economic uncertainties.

# PPL achieves third consecutive hydrocarbon discovery

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL), a national leader in oil and gas exploration and production, proudly announces a remarkable discovery of gas and condensate from its exploration well Pateji X-1 in the Shah Bandar Block, District Sujawal, Sindh. This achievement is the third consecutive hydrocarbon discovery in the Shah Bandar Block under PPL's operatorship, solidifying the company's legacy of delivering consistent results and contributing to Pakistan's energy security.

PPL operates the Shah Bandar Block with a 63% working interest (WI) alongside its esteemed joint venture partners: Mari Petroleum Company Limited (32% WI), and Sindh Energy Holding Company Limited and Government Holdings (Private) Limited (each holding 2.5% WI).

The well was drilled and tested leveraging PPL's extensive indigenous technical expertise, a testament to the company's unwavering commitment to innovation and excellence. After thorough geological and



geophysical evaluations, Pateji X-1 was spud on October 11, 2024, and successfully drilled to a depth of 2,475 meters (measured depth) to target the hydrocarbon potential in the Upper Sands of the Lower Goru Formation.

Drilling results, coupled with state-of-the-art wireline log data, confirmed the presence of hydrocarbon-bearing zones. During testing, the well demonstrated an encouraging flow rate of 11.7 MMscfd gas and 198

barrels per day (bbl/d) of condensate under a well-head flowing pressure of 2,578 psig at a 32/64" choke from the Lower Goru Upper Sands (D-Sand).

This discovery highlights PPL's robust operational capabilities and reflects its dedication to harnessing Pakistan's indigenous resources for sustainable energy development.

The addition of these hydrocarbon reserves will not only strengthen the

country's energy infrastructure but also help mitigate the ongoing energy crisis, reduce reliance on expensive energy imports, and conserve vital foreign exchange reserves.

PPL remains steadfast in its mission to drive national energy self-sufficiency through responsible exploration and production.

This milestone underscores the company's position as a trusted and dynamic leader in Pakistan's energy sector.

# APTSA demands action against smoky vehicles

FAISALABAD (APP): All Pakistan Textile Sizing Association (APTSA) Chairman Shakeel Ahmad Ansari has demanded action against smoke-emitting vehicles to overcome the smog issue.

During a hurriedly-called press conference against the demolition of industrial units in Faisalabad, he said that 60% industrial units had already been closed down due to political instability and high tariffs of electricity. The anti-industry steps of the Environment Protection Department (EPD) would not only disturb the production but also open a floodgate of

unemployment in the country, he claimed.

He said that most of the closed units included power looms and sizing industry and nobody was ready to purchase operational units even as scrap.

Despite this discouraging situation, EPD steps are tantamount to harassing the business community by razing sizing industrial units under the garb of smog, he alleged and urged industrialists to take a joint stand to stop the demolition of industrial units.

He termed smog as a curse of nature and said that

we must seek mercy of Allah to get rid of this man-made crisis.

He said that according to a survey, more than 83% pollution was generated by the automobile sector but instead of nailing down the powerful transport mafia, the EPD had unleashed a planned campaign against industrial units which were providing much-needed jobs to the unemployed youth.

The government should direct the EPD to take action against smoke-emitting vehicles instead of taking stringent measures against industrial units, he demanded.

## Ex-SAARC chamber chief condoles Ilyas Bilour's death

LAHORE (APP): Former president of SAARC Chambers of Commerce and Industry Ifthikhar Ali Malik expressed profound grief and sorrow on the demise of Ilyas Ahmad Bilour, former senator and former president of Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), and a leading industrialist.

In a condolence message, issued on Saturday, the octogenarian trade leader of South Asia lauded Bilour's invaluable contribution to Pakistan's business community and his tireless efforts to strengthen the country's economy. He described Bilour as a visionary leader, whose services as a senator and FPCCI president were instrumental in fostering trade and industry.

He said Bilour's legacy as a dynamic entrepreneur and a steadfast advocate for economic reforms would continue to inspire generations. Extending heartfelt sympathies to the bereaved family, Malik prayed for the departed soul's eternal peace and strength for the family to bear this irreparable loss.



ISLAMABAD: People selecting and purchasing second-hand shoes from Landa Bazaar at Zia Masjid Stop along Expressway.





## In brief

## James makes history as Lakers down Spurs

LOS ANGELES (Agencies): LeBron James recorded a triple-double for the fourth game in a row - the first time he has done so in his career - as the Los Angeles Lakers beat the San Antonio Spurs 120-115 in the NBA Cup. The 39-year-old managed 15 points, 15 rebounds and 12 assists as the Lakers started the defence of their title. It is the first time in James' 22-year NBA career that he has recorded a triple-double - reaching double digits in three out of the five statistical categories - in four consecutive matches. That is despite the four-time NBA champion criticising his own display against the Spurs. "The best thing about my game is I can have [no] rhythm offensively and still have an impact on the game," James said. "I was able to do that tonight." James' performance means he has matched the Lakers' franchise record for consecutive triple-doubles, set by Russell Westbrook in 2021 and Magic Johnson in 1987. The Lakers won the inaugural NBA Cup in 2023, beating the Indiana Pacers 123-109 in the final.

## Yousuf parts ways with PCB

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Former Pakistan cricketer Mohammad Yousuf decided on Saturday to part ways with the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB). Sources divulged that the legendary batter had decided to quit the National Cricket Academy (NCA). Ghulam Ali had been appointed as the Pakistan U-19 coach. Yousuf was assuming responsibilities as the batting coach at the NCA and was also coaching the Pakistan U-19 team. Prior to becoming the batting coach, Yousuf also remained part of the selection committee. Sources privy to the development say it is expected to provide Wahab Riaz with any opportunity to work with the PCB. Riaz could get the opportunity to deal with the matters pertaining to the organisation of the Champions' events. It is pertinent to note that Riaz also remained a part of the selection committee and also worked as the Pakistan national cricket team's manager.

## Ahmed named in Shaheens squad

ISLAMABAD (APP): The men's National Selection Committee has named fast bowler Ahmed Bashir in the Pakistan Shaheens squad for the second four-day match against Sri Lanka 'A', which will begin on Monday (November 18), at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium. Ahmed will replace Mohammad Wasim Jrn, who will now report to the National Cricket Academy in Lahore after picking up an injury during the second Quaid-e-Azam Trophy match that had also sidelined him from the first match, which Pakistan Shaheens won by seven wickets, said a press release. The latest injury is unrelated to the one he sustained during international cricket. Wasim will resume his rehabilitation for the latest injury on Monday.

## Italy beat Japan

MÁLAGA (AFP): Italy became the first team to qualify for the Billie Jean King Cup semi-finals on Saturday as Jasmine Paolini won in singles and doubles to claim a 2-1 victory over Japan. Ena Shibahara won the opening singles after recovering to beat Elisabetta Cocciaretto 3-6, 6-4, 6-4, but French Open and Wimbledon runner-up Paolini levelled the tie with a straight-sets win over Moyuka Uchijima.

## Shiffrin lands record-extending 98th win



PARIS (AFP): US ski star Mikaela Shiffrin dominated the first slalom of the World Cup season in Levi on Saturday, as she clinched her record-extending 98th win on the circuit.

Shiffrin led by 0.60 seconds after the first leg in Finland and comfortably held on to her advantage second time down the course in dark, gloomy conditions to beat Austria's Katharina Liensberger by 0.79sec.

Lena Duerr of Germany took third place at 0.83sec. Duerr finished a distant second behind Shiffrin in last season's slalom standings.

"Amazing way to start the slalom season. I'm super happy," said Shiffrin, who endured an injury-hit 2024 and surrendered her overall crown to Switzerland's Lara Gut-Behrami. Shiffrin, a five-time winner of the women's globe, triumphed for the eighth time in Levi, a small resort located some 170km north of the Arctic Circle.

The winner in Lapland traditionally receives a reindeer, which they get to name but stays in Finland.

"You never forget (about the reindeer)," she said. "I wasn't thinking about it on the run." It was the 61st slalom victory of her career and came with Shiffrin's main rival, Petra Vlhova, still absent as she continues her recovery from a serious knee suffered 10 months ago. Shiffrin and Vlhova have combined to win every race held in Levi since 2014, when Tina Maze won in her final season.

Vlhova has admitted she does not know when she will be back on the pistes after knee surgery and has written off the start of the winter. In increasingly difficult conditions, with heavy snowfalls as the morning progressed, the first run in Levi was marked by around 20 run-offs.

That didn't disturb Shiffrin though as the 29-year-old took charge, ahead of Duerr, with Zrinka Ljutic of Croatia third at 0.73sec. Ljutic's podium bid crumbled during her second attempt as Liensberger, fourth after the opening run, muscled her way onto the top step before being dislodged at the end by Shiffrin.

"(It was) a little bumpy. I was getting twisted sometimes but then kept fighting," said Shiffrin. "It wasn't the perfect tempo but enough for really good turns that it worked really well in the end. Really solid run in conditions that were not too easy." Shiffrin moves top of the standings after bouncing back convincingly from a fifth-place finish in last month's season-opening giant slalom on the Soelden glacier. The women head to Gurgl in Austria next Saturday for another slalom before three consecutive weekends in North America -- two in the United States and one in Canada.

## McIlroy in three-way tie for Dubai lead



DUBAI (AFP): Rory McIlroy holds a three-way share of the lead in Dubai as he closed in Saturday on his goal of securing both the trophies on offer at the DP World Tour Championship. World number three McIlroy shot a four-under 68 in his third round and was joined at the top on 12-under overall by Denmark's Rasmus Hojgaard (66) and France's Antoine Rozner (69).

McIlroy felt disappointed having made six birdies -- and two bogeys -- through his first 12 holes not to capitalise on some good shots towards the end of his round, unable to take advantage at either the par-5 14th or 18th holes. Hojgaard, whose twin brother Nicolai won the tournament last year as McIlroy won the season-long Order of Merit crown, started in brilliant fashion with six birdies in his first eight holes, but had to battle hard on the back nine as he made par at each hole.

Rozner turned around an average round through 17 holes with a stunning second shot from 191 yards on the par-5 18th hole to seven feet and made the putt for a closing eagle. In the Race to Dubai, McIlroy seems to have his name engraved on the trophy already. The only player who can deny him a sixth title, South Africa's Thriston Lawrence, is currently tied 17th at four-under. Lawrence needs to win and McIlroy will have to play poorly and finish outside tied 11th position for that to happen.

"A little bittersweet. After the birdie on 12th, I had a good chance, but my putt on the 13th just caught the edge. And then 14 and 15 are birdie holes, and not being able to birdie either of those, and to make a par with only with a six-iron (for his second shot) in my hand going into the last as well," said McIlroy. "A little disappointed how I played those last five holes, but still in a really good position heading into tomorrow. Tied for the lead. Going out on a course that I really like and had success on before. It's a great opportunity to end the year on a high note. Going to go out there tomorrow and give it my everything, and hopefully, things fall my way and I can stand on that 18th green with both trophies."

Another Hojgaard on the trophy?

Hojgaard smashed his tee shot into the stream running down the middle of the 18th green and then pushed his third shot way right, almost out of bounds. But he dropped a huge par putt from 21 feet to keep himself in the reckoning. "The first nine holes, I thought it was one of the best stretches of golf I played this year. I then had to hang in there on the back nine," said Hojgaard, projected to finish second behind McIlroy in the Race to Dubai.

"The par save on the 18th was huge. It was looking more like an eight at one point. It wasn't an easy pitch shot from where I got the drop. I had already written down a six on my scorecard mentally, but the putt dropped." "It would be great if a different Hojgaard can defend the trophy and I can get my name next to Nicolai." Rozner, a three-time champion on the European Tour, said the eagle on 18th was key.

## ICC announces Champions Trophy tour from Islamabad

LAHORE (APP): The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Saturday announced schedule of the ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025 trophy tour beginning from Islamabad on November 16 and culminating in India on January 27.

The prestigious silverware, in collaboration with DP World, will journey across the eight participating nations during the Tour, providing unique experiences to the fans.

The popular landmarks where the trophy will be displayed on the opening day of its tour in Islamabad are Daman-e-Koh, Faisal Mosque, and the Pakistan Monument where it will be accompanied by Pakistan cricket icon Shoaib Akhtar.

This flags off the international Trophy Tour for the silverware, which will provide special engagement for global fans through dynamic, colourful engagements that speak to the event's new-look visual identity.

After Islamabad, the tour will head to iconic cities and venues in Pakistan such as Karachi, Abbottabad, and Taxila before leaving the land of defending champions to embark on an extensive international tour, where it will continue to showcase the vibrant cultures evident across competing nations.

A series of physical and digital engagements traversing iconic destinations, sporting events, and key battles in the international cricket calendar form the Trophy Tour schedule.

Fans will be treated to a content series titled 'Champion on Tour' that will document the Trophy Tour's journey around the world through the unique lens of food, music, and cricket.

Anurag Dahiya, ICC Chief Commercial Officer, expressed his pleasure at the launch of the event.

"We are delighted to launch the Trophy Tour with DP World ahead of the ICC Men's Champions Trophy, where another action-packed programme of activity is available to fans across the world." He went on to describe the experience that awaited fans.

"The silverware, which will be showcased across all participating nations, will allow the sport's passionate fanbase to enjoy the unforgettable experience of being up close with the iconic trophy," Dahiya said.

## Key dates of the Trophy Tour:

16 November – Islamabad, Pakistan  
17 November – Taxila and Khanpur, Pakistan  
18 November – Abbottabad, Pakistan  
19 November– Murree, Pakistan  
20 November– Nathia Gali, Pakistan  
22 – 25 November – Karachi, Pakistan  
26 – 28 November – Afghanistan  
10 – 13 December – Bangladesh  
15 – 22 December – South Africa  
25 December – 5 January – Australia  
6 – 11 January – New Zealand  
12 – 14 January – England  
15 – 26 January – India  
27 January – event start – Pakistan.

## Kane warns England must protect team culture under new boss

LONDON (AFP): Harry Kane says England must be careful not to lose the positive team culture they have created as they prepare for their final match before the arrival of new manager Thomas Tuchel.

Interim boss Lee Carsley takes charge for the final time on Sunday as the Euro 2024 runners-up look for victory against Ireland that would seal promotion back to the Nations League top tier. It follows an impressive 3-0 win in Greece on Thursday that left England in control of their own destiny in their group.

Carsley stepped in following the resignation in July of Gareth Southgate, who led the team to a World



SYDNEY: Spencer Johnson of Australia celebrates after taking wicket of Sahibzada Farhan of Pakistan during game two of the Men's T20 International series between Australia and Pakistan.

## Johnson takes five-fer as Australia clinch T20I series

SYDNEY (Monitoring Desk): Australia's left-arm pacer Spencer Johnson bagged a five-wicket haul as Australia took an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match T20I series over Pakistan at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Saturday evening. Pakistan fell 13 runs short in pursuit of the 148-run target as Usman Khan's half-century went in vain.

Earlier, Haris Rauf's four for 22 and Mohammad Abbas Afridi's boundary-less 3-17 in four overs helped Pakistan restrict Australia below 150. Sufiyan Moqim backed the pace attack with a tight four-over spell of 2-21.

Haris, who also became the joint leading wicket-taker for Pakistan in T20Is equaling Shadab Khan's tally of 107, put brakes on Australia's fiery start, 52-0 in 3.3 overs, by eking out two wickets in the same over. An over

later Abbas Afridi also struck to remove Australia's top-scorer Matthew Short (32, 17b, 2x4s, 2x6s) as they finished the powerplay with 61-3 on the board.

Sufiyan dismissed Glenn Maxwell (21, 20b, 2x4s) and Marcus Stoinis (14, 15b, 1x4) in the 10th and 12th over, respectively as Australia were 95-5 in 11.3 overs. Aaron Hardie's 23-ball 28 laced with a four and a six took Australia to 147-9 as they managed only 32 runs for three wickets in the last five overs.

In turn, Pakistan put on 30 runs for two wickets in the powerplay. Usman, who hit his maiden T20I half-century (52, 38b, 4x4s, 1x6), walked in to bat at No.4 and joined forces with Muhammad Irfan Khan (37 not out, 28b, 4x4s, 1x6) to lift Pakistan from 44-4 to 102-5 with a 56-run stand for the fifth wicket.

After Usman fell in the 16th over, Pakistan lost their remaining five wickets for just 32 runs with Johnson completing his four over spell with 5-26 and Adam Zampa with 2-19.

The last match of the series will be played on Monday, 18 November at the Bellerive Oval, Hobart.

Scores in brief:  
2nd T20I – Australia beat Pakistan by 13 runs

Australia 147-9, 20 overs (Matthew Short 32, Aaron Hardie 28, Glenn Maxwell 21, Jake Fraser McGurk 20; Haris Rauf 4-22, Mohammad Abbas Afridi 3-17, Sufiyan Moqim 2-21)

Pakistan 134 all out, 19.4 overs (Usman Khan 52, Muhammad Irfan Khan 37 not out; Spencer Johnson 5-26, Adam Zampa 2-19)

Player of the match – Spencer Johnson (Australia)

## England extend ‘best wishes’ to Pakistan for hosting Champions Trophy



LONDON (Web Desk): England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) Chairman Richard Thompson has extended his "best wishes" to the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) for hosting the ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025, slated to be held in the February-March window next year.

The development came during a meeting between PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi and ECB boss Thompson in London. According to the PCB, Chairman Naqvi, accompanied by Salman Naseer, met the ECB chair on Friday amid the ongoing ambiguity surrounding the eight-team mega tournament.

"England's recent tour of Pakistan was very impressive. Our best wishes are with Pakistan for the Champions Trophy," Thompson was quoted as saying by the PCB.

In response, PCB chairman Naqvi affirmed Pakistan's readiness to host the event, highlighting the ongoing renovations of the major stadiums.

"Pakistan is ready to host the Champions Trophy. The stadiums are being upgraded," Naqvi assured Thompson.

The PCB chair further shared that the participating teams will be given state guest protocol upon their visit to Pakistan.

"Foolproof arrangements are being made at every level for the Champions Trophy. Visiting teams will be given state guest protocol," he added.

The development came a day after a report emerged, which claimed that the International Cricket Council (ICC) has asked the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) to provide written justification for its decisions to not visit Pakistan for the Champions Trophy 2025.

Previously, the PCB had sought a written copy of India's official stance from the ICC. As per ICC regulations, the Indian board must present solid reasons for not travelling to Pakistan for the prestigious event.

Insiders revealed that the ICC will assess these reasons before making a final decision on the matter.

## Aliya, Nida dropped as PCB announces women's central contracts

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Aliya Riaz and Nidar Dar are among six players who have been dropped from the list of the central contracts announced by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Saturday.

The board has announced its list of central contracts for 16 women's cricketers for the 2024-25 international season, effective from 1 July 2024, following an annual performance review. Last year, 20 players had received contracts for a two-year period, with the provision that performance would be reassessed after the 2023-24 season.

Pakistan captain Fatima Sana and wicketkeeper-batter Muneeba Ali have been elevated to Category A, while left-arm spinner Sadia Iqbal has moved up to Category B, reflecting their recent performances and growing stature in the game.

The list includes three new entrants: Gull Feroza, Rameen Shamim, and Tasmia Rubab. Tasmia has earned the contract for the first time, marking an important milestone in her career, while Rameen and Gull have returned to the central contract list for the first time since 2018 and 2022-23, respectively.

The contracts of Aliya Riaz, Anosha Nasir, Eyman Fatima, Nida Dar, Shawaal Zulfiqar and Sidra Nawaz have not been renewed for the upcoming season.

However, these players will remain available for selection, as the PCB shifts its focus towards developing the next generation of cricketers in alignment with the ICC Women's Future Tours Programme 2025-29.

List of centrally contracted players:

Category A – Fatima Sana, Muneeba Ali and Sidra Amin

Category B – Nashra Sundhu, Sadia Iqbal

Category C – Diana Baig, Omaira Sohail

Category D – Ghulam Fatima, Gull Feroza, Najiba Alvi, Rameen Shamim, Sadaf Shamas, Syeda Aroob Shah, Tasmia Rubab, Tuba Hassan, Umm-e-Hani.





## In brief

### Two vehicle lifters arrested

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Shahzad Town Police on Saturday apprehended two wanted members of a vehicle-lifting gang involved in multiple car and motorbike thefts, recovering two stolen cars and a motorbike from their possession. A Public relations officer told APP that the Shahzad Town Police, using technical and human intelligence, successfully arrested the suspects identified as Farhad Ud Deen and Ubaid Ur Rehman. He said police team also recovered two stolen cars and a motorbike from their possession. Cases have been registered against the accused and further investigation is underway. DIG Ali Raza directed all senior officials for effective crackdown against the accused involved in criminal activities and ensured the safety of lives and property of citizens on priority basis. Citizens are urged to report any suspicious individual or activity through the emergency helpline "Pucar-15" or via the ICTP-15 app.

### Police bust organized dacoit gang

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory Police's Anti-Robbery and Burglary Unit on Saturday successfully arrested four members of an organized gang involved in multiple robbery incidents. A Public Relations Officer told APP that, the suspects, identified as Waseem Khan, Imran Khan, Khurshid, and Ubaidur-Rehman, admitted to committing robberies at gunpoint. He said in most of the incidents, the dacoits used to tie the security guards (chowkidars) at gunpoint and snatch cash, motorcycles, mobile phones, cameras, and other items. The officer added that stolen items, including mobile phones, cash, LCDs, cameras, a motorcycle, and the weapons used in the robberies, along with ammunition, were recovered from the suspects. The arrested individuals confessed to multiple cases of looting and creating fear among citizens. DIG Syed Ali Raza said the suspects will be prosecuted with concrete evidence to ensure they face exemplary punishment. DIG Raza reaffirmed that the police remain committed to cracking down on organized and active criminal gangs in the city to protect the lives and property of citizens. The DIG commended the police team's outstanding performance and encouraged them to maintain their dedication to eliminating criminal elements.

### PS Sabzi Mandi arrest 379 criminals

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Police Sabzi Mandi station teams have carried out an extensive crackdown against criminal elements in the federal capital over the past 10 months to maintain peace and security. During this period, the Sabzi Mandi police station teams arrested a total of 379 accused involved in various criminal activities and recovered cash and valuables worth over Rs 93 million from their possession, a public relations officer told APP. He said as part of the ongoing "Nasha Ab Nahi" movement in the federal capital, Sabzi Mandi police teams arrested 57 drug dealers and seized 25 kilogram of hashish, 15 kilogram of heroin, 190-gram ice from their possession. Additionally, Sabzi Mandi police teams also conducted extensive operations against those possessing illegal arms and recovered 95 pistols and 212 live rounds from their possession.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Education, Science and Technology Dr Kahlid Maqbool Siddiqui called on Dr Jemal Beker Abdula, Ambassador Extraordinary of Ethiopia at his office. —INP Photo

## NDMA Chairman meets with Jin Liqun at COP29

ISLAMABAD (PPI): National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) Chairman, Lt General Inam Haider Malik, held a sideline meeting with Mr Jin Liqun, President and Chair of the Board of Directors at COP29, in Baku, Azerbaijan.

The meeting focused on critical issues related to climate change and disaster resilience. During the discussion, both leaders emphasized the importance of climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, according to a press release

received here on Saturday from Baku, Azerbaijan.

They highlighted the need for robust support for resilient infrastructure to withstand the increasing frequency and intensity of natural disasters.

Lt General Inam Haider Malik and Mr Liqun also addressed the climate impact on the financial resilience of countries, particularly those most vulnerable to climate change.

They underscored the urgency of releasing funds from the Loss and Damage Fund to support nations in

their recovery and rebuilding efforts.

A key point of the meeting was the creation of an enabling environment that encourages the inclusion of the private sector.

Both leaders agreed that increasing private sector investment in disaster-resilient infrastructure is crucial for sustainable development and long-term resilience. The meeting concluded with a mutual commitment to strengthen collaboration and enhance global efforts in building resilient communities.

### DIG directs patrolling units to enhance crime control efforts

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Syed Ali Raza on Saturday emphasized Islamabad Police commitment to eradicating crime during a briefing to the officers of the Dolphin Squad, Ababeel Squad, and Anti-Riot Unit (ARU).

During the briefing, DIG Islamabad Syed Ali Raza tasked the officers with their respective duties and recognized the efforts of police officers who had performed exceptionally in recent days, awarding them commendation certificates and rewards, a public relations officer told APP.

DIG Ali Raza assured the officers, "Your dedication and hard work will not go in vain. Together, we will ensure the safety of this city and its residents while eliminating criminal elements." Make all patrolling units more effective in curbing crime," said DIG Syed Ali Raza.

During checks at checking points, treat citizens with courtesy and perform your duties with honesty and integrity. Rewards will be given for good performance, while poor performance will lead to strict departmental action, DIG added. DIG Raza stressed that providing citizens with a sense of security and controlling crime is the police's top priority. He emphasized, "Any lapse in this regard will not be tolerated. Our first and foremost goal is the protection of citizens' lives and property."

### World Diabetes Day awareness event held

ISLAMABAD (APP): Capital Hospital, Islamabad, observed World Diabetes Day on Saturday with an awareness event organised by its Endocrinology Department to highlight the rising prevalence of diabetes and the importance of prevention.

The event featured prominent medical professionals, including Executive Director Dr. Naem Taj, Head of Endocrinology Dr. Sarwar Malik, and other specialists.

In his keynote address, Dr. Naem Taj described diabetes as a global health challenge and stressed the need for public education. "Our focus is on raising awareness and encouraging preventive measures to combat this growing issue," he said.

Dr. Sarwar Malik detailed the symptoms, types, and significance of early diagnosis, emphasizing the importance of timely treatment to prevent complications.

Other speakers, including Dr. Hina Inayat and Dr. Maria Shafi, provided practical advice on lifestyle changes and advancements in diabetes care. Dr. Taj concluded the event by reaffirming the hospital's commitment to offering education and preventive services to help reduce the community's diabetes burden.

curb tobacco consumption and improve public health outcomes. Pakistan's current taxation framework for tobacco products remains inconsistent and heavily influenced by political dynamics rather than strategic planning.

The seminar aimed to consolidate civil society's recommendations for the upcoming budget, fostering collaborative efforts to counter the tobacco industry's pervasive influence.

## Ethiopia, Pakistan agree for cooperation in multiple sectors

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ethiopia and Pakistan on Friday agreed to forge a holistic cooperation in education, science and technology sectors for transforming lives of their nations.

Both sides explored various areas of partnership and collaboration in the above-mentioned sectors during a meeting between Special Envoy and Ambassador Extraordinary of Ethiopia, Dr Jemal Beker Abdula and Federal Minister for Education, Science and Technology Dr Kahlid Maqbool Siddiqui.

During the meeting, the two sides further discussed a bilateral memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed in May 2023 between the two countries to enhance cooperation in the areas of science and technology.

Moreover, Dr Jemal Beker stressed on establishing institutional linkages between the two countries

under the MoU for joint research programmes in health, education and renewable sectors and exchange of the delegations of experts to elevate the already flourishing relations.

To this end, the ambassador said Ethiopia is building a market driven human resource development while taking robust policy to ensure a digital ecosystem to enable the citizens to catch and cope up with the changing technological landscape and global dynamism.

He said the government of Ethiopia led by Prime Minister Dr Abiy Ahmed has been taking tangible steps to empower its people through innovation and technology transformation road-map that improve socio-economic revolution in fin-tech, and digital competitiveness. In this regard, the Ethiopian government wants to cooperate with

Pakistan in these sectors.

On the other hand, the Education, Science and Technology Minister lauded the consistent economic growth of Ethiopia and highlighted the religious attachment of the people of Pakistan with Ethiopia.

He said the government of Pakistan is committed to the 'Look Africa and Engage Africa' policy, and forging strong bilateral cooperation with the African countries in multiple sectors such as economy, health, education, science and technology.

The Minister assured the Ambassador of all-out support and assistance for strengthening the cooperation in education, science and technology sectors.

Federal Secretary of the Ministry of Science and Technology Sajid Baloch and Coordinator General COMSTECH Prof Dr M Iqbal Choudhary were also present in the meeting.

## ANF recovers 68 kg drugs in eight operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting eight operations across the country, managed to recover over 68 kg drugs worth more than Rs 7.8 million and arrested nine accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Saturday.

He informed that 1.6 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of an accused going on a motorcycle near a university in Sargodha.

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

In another operation, 10.8 kg opium and 6 kg hashish was recovered from

secret cavities of the car intercepted on Ring Road in Peshawar and two accused were arrested during the operation.

A total of 12 kg hashish was recovered from 4 parcels at a courier office in Peshawar. The seized parcels were being sent to Sialkot, Lahore and Gujranwala.

9.6 kg hashish and 2.4 kg opium were recovered from the bags and personal belongings of 4 accused going in a vehicle near Thokar Niaz Baig Lahore.

184 grams ice was recovered from a parcel booked for Bahrain at a courier office in Johar Town, Lahore.

24 kg hashish was recovered from vehicle intercepted in Faisalabad and an accused was arrested during the operation.

In 7th operation, 50 intoxicating tablets were recovered from a parcel sent from the UK at the courier office in Karachi.

In 8th operation, 994 grams ice was recovered from the possession of an accused travelling in a passenger bus near Bubarlu, Toll Plaza Sukkur.

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



ISLAMABAD: Visitors visiting stalls during the 10-Day "Folk Festival Lok Mela 2024" at Lok Virsa in the Federal Capital. —APP Photo

## Sikandar Hayat visits Lok Virsa Festival in Islamabad

RAWALPINDI (PPI): Punjab's Minister for Education, Rana Sikandar Hayat, visited the Punjab Pavilion at the Lok Virsa Festival in Islamabad with his children. He was welcomed by Rawalpindi Arts Council's Director, Sajjad Hussain, who presented him with a traditional Punjabi turban.

According to a statement on Saturday, Hayat toured various stalls in the pavilion and appreciated the work of artists and

craftsmen. He remarked that the Lok Virsa Festival beautifully showcases the cultures of all provinces, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Azad Kashmir, symbolizing national unity. He highlighted that the similarities among these diverse cultures reflect the spirit of a united nation working together for the country's progress.

Expressing his delight over the vibrant representation of Punjab's culture in the pavilion, he congratulated the Provincial Minister for Information, Uzma Bukhari, for her efforts. He also urged parents to bring their children to the festival to help them better understand Punjab's rich cultural heritage.

Additionally, the minister noted that with schools closed due to smog, the festival provides an excellent opportunity for students from the Rawalpindi division to enjoy recreational and educational activities.

## 33 criminals arrested; drugs, illegal weapons seized

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police on Saturday apprehended 33 outlaws involved in different criminal activities including selling drugs, and possessing illegal weapons recovered from their possession.

A police spokesperson told APP that, the ICT Police Secretariat, Shahzad Town, Kohsar, Sangiani, Sabzi Mandi, Kirpa and Sihala police stations teams took legal action against accused involved in possessing illegal weapons.

He said the police team also arrested 19 accused namely Shah Faisal khan,

Abdur Rehman, Naeem, Farhan Ali, Gulam Habib, Zar, Sardar khan, Syed Abbas, Rashid, Junaid and Farhad and recovered 11 pistols with ammunition from their possession.

Similarly, the Tarnol, Karachi Company, Secretariat and Shahzad Town police station team arrested accused Faisal Mehmood, Wasif, Bilal Javed, Zeeshan, Javed Khan, Farhat Abbas and Arshad and recovered 2100-gram heroin from their possession.

Moreover, 14 absconders, proclaimed offenders and court fugitives were also arrested from various

areas of the city during the last 24 hours.

SSP Operations said that the Islamabad Police is actively working to ensure the safety of citizens' lives and property in the federal capital, emphasizing that no elements will be allowed to disrupt citizens' peace.

Protecting the lives, property, and dignity of citizens is the Islamabad Police's top priority.

Citizens are urged to report any suspicious activities to the relevant police station, emergency helpline "Pucar-15" to help make the city crime-free through cooperation between the police and the public.



### Kandahar exports onions

KANDAHAR (BNA): The Directorate of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock of Kandahar has announced the export of 33,599 tons of onions over the past year to various international markets. According to the report, the majority of these exports were destined for the United Arab Emirates, India, Qatar, and Pakistan. This achievement underscores Kandahar's growing contribution to Afghanistan's agricultural exports.

## The Frontier Post

Jamadi-ul-Awwal 14 1446 — Sunday, November 17, 2024

### Taliban arrest Yasinzada

KABUL (Amu TV): Abdul Quddus Yasinzada, the founder of the Resalat educational foundation in Herat, has been arrested by the Taliban. Yasinzada, a well-known figure in Herat's education sector, was reportedly detained more than 10 days ago. The reasons for his arrest remain unclear, and the Taliban have yet to comment on the matter. Yasinzada's detention adds to growing concerns over the Taliban's increasingly repressive measures, particularly in the education sector.

# Turkey, Qatar leaders call for inclusive govt in Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani issued a joint statement urging the formation of an inclusive government in Afghanistan.

The leaders emphasized the importance of respecting the fundamental rights of the people of Afghanistan and ensuring stability in the country.

Sheikh Tamim visited Ankara to attend the 10th session of the Qatar-Turkey High Strategic Committee. During the visit, several agreements were signed, and a joint statement was released.

The joint statement, published on Friday, November 16, on Qatar's Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, reiterated the leaders' call

for a government in Afghanistan that respects basic rights and is inclusive of all groups.

Both leaders expressed their commitment to supporting stability in Afghanistan and stressed the importance of coordinated engagement with the country and the continuation of humanitarian assistance.

The joint call from Turkey and Qatar highlights the pressing need for an inclusive and stable government in Afghanistan, especially as the country faces mounting political and social challenges. Their emphasis on continued humanitarian aid underscores the dire conditions many Afghans endure daily.

Amidst the ongoing humanitarian crisis, millions in Afghanistan face severe

food shortages, limited healthcare, and economic collapse. Global engagement and coordinated aid are essential to alleviate suffering and ensure that Afghan people, particularly women and children, can access basic rights and services.

Over the past three years, numerous countries and organizations have urged the Taliban to establish an inclusive government and respect women's rights, emphasizing the need for broad representation in governance.

Despite international appeals, the Taliban has consistently claimed that its administration is inclusive and has dismissed global calls for broader governance and human rights as interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs.

## Six killed in traffic accident in Badakhshan

BADAKHSHAN (Amu TV): At least six people, including women and children, were killed in a traffic accident on the Bazarak-Faizabad highway in Afghanistan's Badakhshan province, officials said.

Ehsanullah Kamgar, a spokesperson for the Taliban's Department of Security in Badakhshan, said the accident occurred when a vehicle, a Passo model car, veered off the road and plunged into a river in the Ab Afshak area.

The tragedy adds to a growing toll of road accidents in Afghanistan. Data compiled by Amu over the past three months indicates that nearly 120 people have died and more than 300 have been injured in traffic accidents across the country.

Observers attribute the rise in such incidents to deteriorating road conditions and driver negligence. Experts have called for urgent measures to improve infrastructure and enforce road safety regulations to prevent further loss of life.

## Former Canadian soldier held

KABUL (Amu TV): David Lavery, a former Canadian Forces soldier who aided in evacuating Afghans during the fall of Kabul, has been arrested by the Taliban.

CTV National News, citing unnamed sources, reported that Lavery was detained shortly after arriving in Kabul on a flight Monday. His current whereabouts remain unknown, but sources say he is being held by the Taliban.

Lavery, who operates a private security firm, Raven Rae Consulting Services, has been a familiar figure in Afghanistan for years. Known locally as "Canadian Dave," he played a prominent role in 2021 during the chaotic evacuation from Hamid Karzai International Airport.

Lavery and his team helped extract individuals with valid Canadian documentation, coordinating with evacuees who were instructed to wear red and look for him amid the crowd.

Global Affairs Canada confirmed in an email that it is "aware of an incident involving a Canadian in Afghanistan." The agency added, "Canadian officials continue to monitor the situation closely and are providing consular assistance."

CTV News reported that it reached out to Global Affairs Canada to confirm whether Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's office had been briefed on Lavery's arrest, but officials declined to comment.

During the fall of Kabul in August 2021, Lavery helped approximately 100 people flee Afghanistan, working under precarious conditions as thousands of Afghans sought refuge.

# Osmani meets Afghan envoy to Uzbekistan



KABUL (BNA): Mawlawi Sadar Azam Osmani, Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Livestock, met with Mawlawi Abdul Ghafar Bahr, Afghanistan's Ambassador to Uzbekistan, to discuss key areas of agricultural cooperation and trade facilitation.

As per a statement from the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock, the discussions revolved around enhancing export opportunities for Afghan agricultural products, organizing agricultural exhibitions,

capacity building for ministry personnel, importing improved seed varieties, and addressing quarantine protocols.

The Deputy Minister emphasized the importance of highlighting the superior quality of Afghan agricultural products during engagements with Uzbek authorities. He also encouraged the Ambassador to advocate for increased trade cooperation, focusing on the export and utilization of Afghanistan's agricultural goods in Uzbekistan.

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products during engagements with Uzbek authorities. He also encouraged the Ambassador to advocate for increased trade cooperation, focusing on the export and utilization of Afghanistan's agricultural goods in Uzbekistan.

# Rising firewood prices leave Kabul residents struggling

KABUL (TOLONews): Some residents of the capital complain about the high prices of firewood and fuel, saying they cannot afford to buy wood.

They urge the interim government officials to address the high cost of wood in the markets.

Dilawar, a resident of Kabul, said: "This year, wood is more expensive compared to previous years. Oak wood costs 13,050 afghani per (560kg) but walnut, apricot, and mulberry wood is cheaper."

Mohammad Anwar, another resident of Kabul,

said: "Our request to the government is to allow the availability of wood for a month or two because people are jobless and struggling. They should release the wood to solve people's problems."

Some wood sellers believe that if oak wood is allowed to enter the capital, its prices will decrease.

Imamuddin, a seller, said: "The import of forest wood is restricted, and oak wood that used to come earlier no longer reaches Kabul. Now, mostly walnut, mulberry, and apricot wood is available. Even if

oak wood comes, it's too expensive for people to buy."

Qasim, another seller, added: "Our request to the government is to allow the wood to come to Kabul so people's problems can be resolved."

Officials from the Wood Sellers' Union cite the restriction on importing wood to the capital as one of the reasons for the high prices.

Ajmal Wahidi, a member of the Wood Sellers' Union, said: "The reason wood is not allowed to come to Kabul is that the quantity

available is sufficient for those provinces. They don't let the excess be brought to Kabul. If we calculate the transportation cost, it reaches 13,000 or 12,000 afghani, so people in those provinces are forced to buy it there. That's the main reason. People also can't bring it because it's expensive."

Meanwhile, power outages in the capital are increasing with the arrival of winter. As a result, families are compelled to purchase heating materials like wood and coal to warm their homes during the cold season.

# Nearly 200 Afghan families deported from Iran and Pakistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): Officials from the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation reported that nearly 200 Afghan families have been deported from Pakistan and Iran, returning to Afghanistan through various border points.

According to Bakhtar News Agency on Saturday, a total of 169 Afghan families entered the country via the provinces of Kandahar, Nangarhar, Nimroz, and Herat.

Ministry officials stated that these families received initial assistance upon their return.

They have also been referred to domestic and international aid organizations for further support.

This development comes as the deportation of Afghan refugees from Iran and Pakistan has significantly increased in recent months, raising concerns



about the welfare of returnees.

The Islamic Republic of Iran recently announced plans to deport two million undocumented Afghan refugees by the end of the year, intensifying the repatriation process.

Similarly, the Pakistani government has escalated efforts to remove Afghan refugees without proper residency documentation, resulting in large-scale returns to Afghanistan.

The forced return of Afghan families highlights

the increasing pressures faced by refugees in neighboring countries.

Many returnees struggle to reintegrate into Afghanistan, where economic challenges and limited resources compound their difficulties.

# Deputy Minister heads to Iran for railway talks



KABUL (Ariana News): Deputy Minister of Public Works for Railways, Mohammad Ishaq Sahibzadeh, on Saturday headed to Iran for talks. Mohammad Ashraf

Haqshenas, the spokesman of the Ministry of Public Works, said in a statement that the visit takes place at the invitation of Iran's railway authority and with the aim of expanding rail coop-

eration.

According to the statement, the two sides will discuss how to increase transportation through the Khaf-Herat railway and bilateral rail cooperation.

# Leatherwork industry on brink of extinction

HERAT (TOLONews): The leatherwork and fur tailoring industry, which is considered one of the ancient crafts of Herat, is on the verge of extinction.

Out of hundreds of leatherworkers who were previously active in Herat, only two remain to continue this craft.

Ghulam Haider Akrami, one of these veteran leatherworkers with over 90 years of experience, along with his brother, has kept this industry alive. He produces leather clothing and hats using the hides of animals such as sheep, cows, and even wild animals.

Ghulam Haider told TOLONews: "I might have goods worth 10 lakh afghani stored at home, but

I am struggling to cover my expenses. When no one buys, what can I do? I can't eat the leather."

According to Ghulam Haider, not long ago, there were over a hundred leather workshops active in Herat. However, nearly all of them have abandoned this craft and turned to other jobs.

Ali Ahmad, another leatherworker in Herat, said: "Our profession currently has no growth or demand; it's just fading away. I think only the two of us in Herat are keeping this trade alive. No one else is continuing leather and fur crafts."

The lack of exports for leather clothing and declining domestic demand are among the main reasons for the stagnation of this

ancient industry.

Mohammad Akbar, a seller of leather clothing, said: "Here, during the winter, we make a few hats, vests, and such to sell, and people use them. We produce only as much as is in demand."

According to some sellers, the main buyers of leather clothing and hats used to be foreign tourists. However, with the decline in tourism, the sales of these products have drastically decreased.

In the past, many people used leather clothing and hats during the winter season. However, with the import of winter clothing from various countries into Afghanistan, the demand for these leather products has gradually diminished.

# Ex-Iranian official criticizes US over Afghanistan intervention again



KABUL (Khaama Press): Former Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Rasoul Mousavi criticized a recent meeting of former US officials on Washington's future policy in Afghanistan, stating that the US has not learned lessons from the war in Afghanistan and continues to discuss intervention without understanding its purpose.

The meeting, hosted by the Global and National Security Institute at the University of Florida, included former officials from Afghanistan and the United States to assess America's future engagement in Afghanistan.

Mousavi, in a social media post on X, remarked, "The US fought in Afghanistan for 20 years

without understanding why, and it still hasn't learned. Now, it talks about intervention again, still not knowing why."

During the meeting, former Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai sent a brief message, while figures like General Frank McKenzie, former US CENTCOM Commander, and Zalmay Khalilzad, former US

envoy to Afghanistan, addressed various aspects of US involvement.

General McKenzie described the US war in Afghanistan as a "necessity" for combating terrorist groups.

He admitted military mistakes, such as the failure to kill Osama bin Laden early on, and argued that the US should have focused on counterterrorism rather than building a government in Afghanistan.

Khalilzad emphasized the potential of the Doha Agreement as a framework for US cooperation with the Taliban, stating that while expectations should be tempered, the agreement still holds value for collaboration.

The discussions at the meeting underscored the complex and often controversial nature of US involvement in Afghanistan, with key figures reflecting on past mistakes and proposing frameworks for future engagement.

## Taliban's invitation to COP29 sparks outcry over HR record

KABUL (Amu TV): The Canada Feminist Forum for Afghanistan has expressed strong opposition to the Taliban's invitation to the COP29 climate conference in Baku, Azerbaijan, calling it a blatant disregard for the group's human rights violations.

In an open letter to the United Nations, the advocacy group argued that the invitation undermines the UN's core values and principles. "At no point have the Taliban demonstrated their commitment to the national interests of Afghanistan or toward global cooperation on climate change," the letter stated.

The group condemned the Taliban's ongoing human rights abuses, describing the severe restrictions imposed on women and girls as tantamount to gender apartheid. "The Taliban continue to perpetrate serious human rights violations as an integral aspect of their rule," the letter read, adding that the group is neither recognized by the Afghan people nor the international community as a legitimate governing authority.

The letter also accused the Taliban of exploiting Afghanistan's humanitarian crisis—much of which they are responsible for creating—to enrich themselves and promote an extremist agenda.

## New TV channel launched in exile

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Afghanistan Journalists Center has welcomed the official launch of the "Deeyar" television network and emphasized the importance of increasing free media outside the country.

This media support organization issued a statement applauding the start of Deeyar TV's broadcasts outside Afghanistan.

The organization highlighted that, given the severe restrictions on information dissemination within Afghanistan, the establishment of Diyar TV abroad fulfills a crucial need for the community.

The organization further stated that the growth of free media outside Afghanistan could effectively reflect the realities of the society in the country.

Deeyar TV also issued a statement on Friday announcing the commencement of its official broadcasts outside Afghanistan, marking a significant step for exiled Afghan journalism.

The television network noted

that this platform was established through the initiative of several Afghan journalists living in exile.

The broadcasting platform has officially started operations from the state of Virginia, USA, aiming to provide news and insights relevant to the Afghan community.

The launch of Deeyar TV represents a beacon of hope for Afghan journalism, offering an alternative platform for truth and transparency in the face of harsh media restrictions at home.

It underscores the resilience of Afghan journalists committed to keeping their society informed, despite the challenges of exile.

The presence of free media outlets like Deeyar TV outside Afghanistan not only provides a voice to the silenced but also serves as a crucial link between the global community and the ongoing struggles within Afghanistan, fostering awareness and support for those affected by the current situation.



## Law and order situation in KP Kundi for calling APC

### F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi on Saturday announced to spearhead efforts for an 'All Parties Conference' (APC) to discuss and resolve law and order issues in the province.

Talking to media persons here at the Dera Press Club, the KP governor said that all stakeholders including political parties would be invited to share their respective suggestions for resolving the grave issue of law and order in the province.

He lamented that the provincial government had completely failed to resolve the law and order problem, as it had neither convened a cabinet meeting nor initiated any serious discussions in the provincial assembly on the matter. Rather, the Governor said the provincial government was focusing on protests, rallies, and entertainment activities, which were only exacerbating issues.

The Governor also remarked that the current actions of the provincial government will not resolve the political challenges being faced by PTI, nor will they be able to control the ongoing crisis in the province. He said the employees of various provincial departments were protesting on roads over delayed salaries, stressing that the provincial government needed to take urgent steps to resolve these issues.

He was of the view that the non-payment of salaries to employees, especially teachers, had caused public anger, which was also affecting law and order in the province. He said that under the 18th Amendment, law and order had become the responsibility of the provincial government, but the provincial government's failure prompted him to sent a letter to the Prime Minister as federal representative in this regard.

The Governor also pointed out that 26 out of 34 universities in the province currently lacked Vice Chancellors, and assured that he would not allow the sale of any university land. He stated that if the PTI founding chairman's wife, Bushra Bibi, had been released by an independent judiciary, then the release of the founder of PTI would also come through the courts

rather processions.

He underlined the need for a united front to discuss provincial rights with the federal government. Regarding developmental projects in the area, the governor mentioned that the Chashma Lift Canal project would soon be inaugurated in Dera Ismail Khan.

He also stated that to address the issue of low gas pressure, five new TBS (Turbine Booster Stations) were being installed, and work was ongoing on the gas pipeline in Kotla Syedan and Korai areas. Governor Kundi also regretted that the political FIR lodged against Jamiat Ulema Islam Fazl (JUI-F) leader Kafeel Ahmed Nizami, saying that such political maneuvers were unacceptable. He said that despite political differences, such retaliatory actions should not be supported. Earlier, the Governor also condoled with Dera Press Club President Yasin Qureshi over the sad demise of later's wife. The governor prayed the Almighty to rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant patience to bereaved family members to bear this loss with fortitude.

Meanwhile, Governor Faisal Karim Kundi has underlined the need for making collective efforts for development of Dera Ismail Khan. He expressed these views during a meeting with senior journalist and PTV Bureau Chief, Dr. Wazir Jafar Zakori at the latter's residence.

Vice Chairman of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Red Crescent, Farzand Ali Wazir, PPP District President Malik Farhan Afzal Dhap, Tehsil Nazim Dera Ismail Khan, Humayun Khan Miankhel and other dignitaries also accompanied the governor. During the meeting, they discussed the local issues of Dera Ismail Khan, the political situation of the province, and various matters of mutual interest.

The Governor emphasized the need for collaborative efforts to promote peace and prosperity in the province and highlighted the importance of working together with the journalistic community for the betterment of the region. The other participants also expressed their views and urged the governor to focus on more developmental projects for Dera Ismail Khan.

## Dutch govt survives dispute over violence

AMSTERDAM (Reuters): Dutch Prime Minister Dick Schoof saved his governing coalition despite threats of an exodus by cabinet members over the right-wing government's response to violence against Israeli soccer fans last week.

Junior Finance Minister Nora Achahbar unexpectedly quit the cabinet on Friday to protest claims by some politicians that Dutch youths of Moroccan descent attacked Israeli fans in Amsterdam around the Nov. 7 match between Dutch side Ajax and Maccabi Tel Aviv. Her resignation triggered a crisis cabinet meeting at which four ministers from her centrist NSC party also threatened to quit. If they had, the coalition would have lost its majority in parliament.

"We have reached the conclusion that we want to remain, as a cabinet for all people in the Netherlands," Schoof said at a news conference late on Friday in The Hague. Last week's violence was roundly condemned by Israeli and Dutch politicians, with Amsterdam's mayor saying "antisemitic hit-and-run squads" had attacked Israeli fans. The city's police department has said Maccabi fans were chased and beaten by gangs on scooters. Police also said the Israeli fans attacked a taxi and burned a Palestinian flag.

Achahbar, a former judge and public prosecutor who was born in Morocco, felt comments by several political figures were hurtful and possibly racist. De Volkskrant daily reported. "Polarization in the recent weeks has had such an effect on me that I no longer can, nor wish to fulfil my position in this cabinet," Achahbar said in a statement. Schoof, a former civil servant who does not have a party affiliation, denied any ministers in the cabinet are racist. Details of the cabinet discussion were not disclosed.

The coalition is led by the anti-Muslim populist party PVV of Geert Wilders, which came top in a general election a year ago. The government was installed in July after months of tense negotiations. Wilders, who is not a cabinet member, has repeatedly said Dutch youth of Moroccan descent were the main attackers of the Israeli fans, although police have not specified the backgrounds of suspects. Schoof said on Monday the incidents showed that some youth in the Netherlands with immigrant backgrounds did not share "Dutch core values."

## Iran denies envoy's meeting with Musk

TEHRAN (AFP): Iran's foreign ministry spokesman on Saturday "categorically" denied The New York Times report on Tehran's ambassador to the United Nations meeting with US tech billionaire Elon Musk, state media reported.

In an interview with state news agency IRNA, spokesman Esmail Baghaei was reported as "categorically denying such a meeting" and expressing "surprise at the coverage of the American media in this regard." The Times reported on Friday that Musk, who is a close ally of President-elect Donald Trump, met earlier this week with Iran's ambassador to the UN, Amir Saeid Iravani.

It cited anonymous Iranian sources describing the encounter as "positive." Iranian newspapers, particularly those aligned with the reformist party that supports President Masoud Pezeshkian, largely described the meeting in positive terms before Baghaei's statement.

In the weeks leading up to Trump's re-election, Iranian officials have signalled a willingness to resolve issues with the West. Iran and the United States cut diplomatic ties shortly after the 1979 Islamic revolution that toppled the US-backed Shah of Iran, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi. Since then, both countries have communicated through the Swiss embassy in Tehran and the Sultanate of Oman.



ISLAMABAD: A stunning view of super moon during dark cloudy weather.

## Sharjeel hosts dinner for Bilawal

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon hosted a dinner in Karachi in honour of Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and the owners of media houses.

The event was attended by Mian Aamir, Mir Ibrahim, Sultan Lakhani, Aleem Khan, Duraid Siddiqui, Sultana Siddiqui, Athar Qazi, Ahmed Zuberi, Dr. Kareem Rajpar, and Naz Afrin Sehgal. Other notable attendees included Shahryar Chishti, Ghulam Nabi Morai, Sofia Chishti, Shakeel Masood, Senator Sarmad Ali, Ejazul Haque, Murtaza Wahab, Shazia Atta Marri, and Qasim Naveed Qamar.

Meanwhile, Chairman of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has emphasized the significance of fostering mutual respect, understanding, and compassion among diverse communities to build a harmonious society.

On the occasion of the International Day for Tolerance, he highlighted tolerance as a cornerstone of peaceful coexistence and a prerequisite for the development of an inclusive and progressive nation. The Chairman of PPP reiterated party's commitment to promoting values that



uphold equality, justice, and respect for all individuals irrespective of their faith, ethnicity, or cultural background. "Tolerance is not merely an act of endurance but an acknowledgment and celebration of our shared humanity. It is a beacon of hope for societies struggling against discrimination, prejudice, and hatred," he stated.

He also paid tribute to the founding principles of Pakistan, which championed equality and freedom for all citizens. He underlined the vision of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, who tirelessly advocated for a society where diversity is celebrated, and human dignity is respected.

Reflecting on the current challenges faced globally, including rising intolerance, polarization, and islamophobia, the PPP Chairman urged leaders, educators, and citizens to work collectively to uphold the principles of tolerance. He said, "Today, we reaffirm our resolve to combat all forms of extremism and to stand united against forces that seek to divide us."

Let us ensure that Pakistan remains a land of pluralism, compassion, and respect." The PPP Chairman called upon citizens to honor this day by reflecting on their role in creating an equitable society and by taking steps to bridge divides, heal wounds, and promote harmony in their communities.

## Civilians killed in fresh Israeli airstrikes on Beirut

BEIRUT: Toxic white dust hangs over the skies of Chiyah, the only area in Beirut's southern suburbs where residents, until three days ago, clung to their homes, believing it was relatively safe from Israeli airstrikes. Israeli warplanes launched more than 10 intermittent airstrikes on Saturday on buildings, whose residents had been warned half an hour before by the Israeli army to evacuate.

The number of strikes targeting the area in recent days has exceeded 30, reducing neighborhoods in Chiyah to rubble. Fires have consumed buildings that remain standing, despite the intense destruction caused by missile explosions. Kamel, a lawyer and a resident of the area, initially hesitated to return to the neighborhood that he had fled less than an hour earlier. He intended to check on his home after a strike hit a building adjacent to his own. As Kamel tried to enter the area, all he could see were "piles of rubble that have changed the landmarks of the neighborhood where I was born and lived, a place where I knew the placement and color of every stone."

Kamel, his eyes reddened by the pervasive smoke and his voice choked from the dust, said: "I do not understand why this neighborhood is being targeted. There is no Hezbollah presence here, only families who migrated from the countryside to the capital's outskirts to live at the lowest possible cost. "Who will compensate us? We do not belong to any party. Why all this destruction? How long will this go on? I am at retire-

ment age; how can I rebuild what I lost today?" Israeli raids on Saturday covered a significant number of targets, including a building near the headquarters of the Supreme Islamic Shia Council in Gobeiri, as well as Burj Al-Barajneh, Haret Hreik, Gobeiri and Bir Abed. A raid destroyed four buildings on Abbas Al-Moussawi Street, and a building adjacent to the Haret Hreik municipality. Safia, an 18-year-old resident, sustained a head injury from missile shrapnel. This was despite abiding by the Israeli evacuation warnings and remaining 500 meters from the targeted area. Safia was taking pictures on her phone at the time of the strike.

The increased hostilities that escalated in southern Lebanon have apparently halted the settlement talks that have taken place over the past two days, especially with the draft diplomatic solution received by Hezbollah. Two paramedics were killed and four others were injured in a raid that targeted Hezbollah's Islamic Health Organization in Kfar Tebnit.

Israeli warplanes carried out violent strikes against Tyre and its suburbs, where raids targeted the monuments area, Al-Hosh area and the industrial zone, injuring three people. The raids destroyed houses in dozens of villages in Nabatieh, Tyre and Iklim Al-Teffah, and injured six people in Amoun. Lebanon's Civil Defense Forces pulled two victims from the rubble in Al-Ramadih. Paramedics said that they had recovered five bodies. An Israeli raid on a house in Qana in Iklim Al-Teffah Friday night

killed citizen Nehmatallah Hussein Mallah, his wife and his three children. Israeli forces continued their incursion into Lebanese territory in the town of Chamaa, 6 km from the southern border, under extensive fire cover. Hezbollah reported that it engaged in confrontations with the Israeli army to the east of the Lebanese town of Markaba. The Israeli army carried out the demolition of the Shimon Shrine in the town of Chamaa on Friday night. Additionally, the headquarters of UNIFIL in the town was struck by an artillery shell. Israeli army units made additional attempts to infiltrate the town of Ad-Dahira, as well as the axis of Tyre Haria and Al-Jabeen. This led to intense confrontations between Hezbollah and the Israeli forces, resulting in heavy Israeli artillery bombardment of these towns.

Hezbollah reported targeting of several Israeli sites, including the command center of the infantry battalion of the Eastern Brigade 769, located at the Ramim barracks, the Stella Maris naval base (a strategic site for maritime surveillance along the northern coast), the Shraga base (the administrative headquarters of the Golan Brigade) north of the city of Acre, and a gathering of soldiers at the newly established command center of the Western Brigade in the Yara barracks and the settlement of Kiryat Shmona. Hezbollah launched an "aerial offensive using a swarm of attack drones targeting the headquarters of the special naval unit Shayetet 13 at the Atlit base, located south of Haifa. — Arab News

## 10 newborns killed in hospital fire in Uttar Pradesh

NEW DELHI (AFP): A fire at the neonatal unit of an Indian hospital killed 10 newborns, authorities said on Saturday, with another 16 clinging to life after a blaze blamed on a faulty oxygen machine. Building fires are common in India due to shoddy construction and a routine disregard for safety regulations.

The fire broke out at about 10:30pm (5pm GMT) on Friday night at the Maharani Lakshmbai Medical College in Jhansi, around 450 kilometres south of the capital New Delhi. Footage from the scene showed charred beds and walls inside the ward as a crowd of anguished families waited outside. "My child has gone forever," one mother wailed as she clutched her head in grief. Babies rescued from the fire, all only days old, were laid side by side on a bed elsewhere in the hospital as hospital staff hooked up their arms to intravenous drips.

"Ten infants have sadly died," Uttar Pradesh deputy chief minister Brajesh Pathak told reporters. "Seven

bodies have been identified. Three bodies haven't been identified as yet." Another 16 infants who were rescued were undergoing medical treatment, police superintendent Gyanendra Kumar Singh said. He also said the fire likely started in a piece of machinery used to enrich the level of oxygen in the atmosphere. "All children rescued are safe and getting medical attention," Singh told AFP. "The fire was most likely due to a fire in an oxygen concentrator."

Pathak said a safety audit of the hospital was carried out in February followed by a fire drill three months later. "The cause of the fire will be probed," he added. "If any lapses are found, strict action will be taken against those responsible and no one will be spared." Broadcaster NDTV reported that 54 infants were in the neonatal intensive care unit when the fire broke out. Prime Minister Narendra Modi called the deaths "heart-wrenching" in a post on social media platform X.

"My deepest condolences to those

who have lost their innocent children in this. I pray to God to give them the strength to bear this immense loss," he wrote. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath announced a compensation of 500,000 Indian rupees (\$5,900) each to the bereaved families. "The district administration and concerned officials have been instructed to carry out relief and rescue operations on a war footing," Adityanath wrote on X.

"I pray to Lord Shri Ram to provide salvation to the departed souls and speedy recovery to the injured." Friday's fire comes six months after a similar blaze at a children's hospital in New Delhi that killed six newborns. Authorities said that the hospital was not properly licensed and lacked proper fire exits, and police arrested a doctor and the facility's owner in the aftermath. Earlier in May, a blaze occurred at a hospital just hours after at least 27 people were killed, including several children, when a fire broke out at a packed amusement park arcade in another part of the country.