

Govt reduces power tariff
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has cut down the electricity prices by Rs1.14 per unit. In this regard, the NEPRA issued a notification on Monday. According to the documents, the reduction was made under the fuel price adjustment for October. The documents also inform that the power distribution companies, have been directed to provide relief to consumers in their electricity bills.



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PM for ensuring safe evacuation of Pakistanis from Syria

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday directed the authorities concerned to formulate an action plan for the safe evacuation of Pakistanis, wishing to return from Syria, via neighboring countries as soon as possible.

The prime minister was chairing a meeting held here to review the current situation of Syria and safe evacuation of Pakistanis present in that country. He said: "All possible steps should be taken to ensure the safe evacuation of Pakistanis from Syria."

"The safety of Pakistanis' lives and property in Syria is our top priority," the prime minister said while instructing to utilize all available resources for this purpose. He also directed the Pakistan Embassy in Damascus to establish an information desk and a helpline to facilitate the Pakistanis. Until the security situation improves, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Crisis Management Unit and information desks at Pakistani embassies in Syria and its neighboring countries should remain operational round-the-clock, the prime minister directed. The meeting was attended by Deputy Prime Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Defense Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Cheema, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, Special Assistant Tariq Fatemi, and senior officials from relevant departments.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif directed the relevant authorities to take swift actions against those involved in recent unrest, vandalism and chaos and damaging both public and private properties in Islamabad.

However, he directed to make it sure that no innocent and law-abiding citizen is arrested during the crackdown against those spreading chaos. Chairing a review meeting on law and order situation, the prime minister stressed that the government will not allow anyone to disrupt the stability of the rapidly improving economy through creating

Shehbaz reaffirms resolve to enhance Pakistan-Qatar business ties

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to enhance trade, investment and business ties with Qatar. Addressing a ceremony in Islamabad today in connection with the Qatar's National Day, he said Pakistan and Qatar are brotherly nations having strong fraternal bonds. Extending heartfelt congratulations to the Emir and the people of Qatar, he said under the dynamic and prudent leadership of Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Qatar has achieved remarkable progress.

The Prime Minister said the successful organization of the World Cup Football Tournament is a testament to the Emir of Qatar's commitment to boost sports activities. Shehbaz Sharif also recalled his recent visit to Doha, where he inaugurated a Pakistani exhibition organized by the esteemed sister of the Emir of Qatar. The PM expressed his gratitude to both Emir of Qatar and his sister for organizing the exhibition. He acknowledged Qatar's continued support in fostering the talents of Pakistan's young IT experts. He said Pakistan is implementing several comprehensive programmes to send skilled IT professionals to Qatar, who will serve as excellent ambassadors for the country. Shehbaz extended an invitation to Emir of Qatar to visit Pakistan, saying that his visit will significantly enhance mutual relations between the two countries.

chaos. PM Shehbaz Sharif also ordered to make the process of identifying those inciting disorder more effective and to gather solid evidence against them. "Provide all necessary resources to the task force formed to take action against such elements," he said. The prime minister also instructed to bring the Federal Prosecution Service under the Ministry of Law. He also asked the relevant authorities to complete the Islamabad Jail construction at the earliest and ensure immediate release of funds for this purpose. During the meeting, it was informed that the scope of the Islamabad Safe City project was being expanded besides increasing the number of Safe City cameras.

The meeting was also informed that the Islamabad Jail building will be completed by March next year. The meeting was attended by Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema, Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi, Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar, Information Minister Attaullah Tarar, Advisor to PM Rana

Sanaullah, Minister of State for Information Technology Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Coordinator to PM Rana Ihsan Afzal and other relevant high officials.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has called upon all Pakistani citizens, including federal and provincial governments, media, UN agencies, NGOs, and civil society, to unite and contribute to building a more inclusive and equitable society.

In his message on International Human Rights Day, the prime minister said that since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations in 1948, the commemoration of International Human Rights Day on 10th December every year, reminded all nations of the world to adhere to protecting inviolable human rights and preserve human values. He mentioned that much before the adoption of the Human Rights Declaration by the UN; the sacred religion Islam had exhorted human beings to follow tenets of human values.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Ambassador of Qatar to Pakistan, Ali Mubarak ali Essa Al-Khater cutting cake to celebrate, Qatar's National Day.

2 militants killed in operation

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Security Forces conducted an intelligence based operation in general area Kulachi, Dera Ismail Khan District on reported presence of khwarij.

During the conduct of operation, own troops effectively engaged khwarij location, as a result of which, two Khwarij were sent to hell, while one Kharij was apprehended in injured condition.

Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from these Khwarij, who remained actively involved in terrorist activities against the security forces as well as target killing of innocent civilians. Sanitization operation is being conducted to eliminate any other Kharij found in the area, as security forces of Pakistan are determined to wipe-out the menace of terrorism from the country.

President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday commended the security forces for successful operation against Khawarij terrorists in Kulachi area of Dera Ismail Khan.

In separate statements, the president and the prime minister paid tribute to the officers and personnel of the security forces for killing two Khawarij and arresting another during the operation. They expressed the resolve to continue operations until elimination of terrorism in the country. The entire nation stands behind its security forces in this war against terrorism, they added.

Pakistanis safe in Syria: FO

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office has stated that all Pakistani nationals in Syria are safe, and have been advised to exercise caution under the evolving situation.

In a statement issued in Islamabad, the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said we are closely monitoring the evolving situation in Syria.

Saif flays false cases against Imran Khan

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Information and Public Relations, Barrister Dr. Saif, on the occasion of International Anti-Corruption Day, emphasized that today marks a day to renew our resolve for a corruption-free Pakistan. He stated, "For decades, two corrupt political families have been eating away at Pakistan like termites. Today, we must pledge to rid our nation of their grip."

He further said these two political families have exploited national resources for personal gains. "One family built assets in the UK, while the other filled Swiss bank accounts. Their corruption has ruined Pakistan's economy and development, yet their personal wealth has multiplied significantly," he remarked. He added, "These families rule Pakistan but build their assets abroad. Their corruption has not only ruined the economy but also plunged the people into poverty and unemployment."

Barrister Dr. Saif condemned the false cases against Imran Khan, who challenged the corruption of these elements. He lauded Imran Khan's vision,

stating, "Eliminating corruption and ensuring true freedom is Imran Khan's vision. To establish a strong, corruption-free Pakistan, we must support his vision. The nation must unite to break free from the clutches of these corrupt elites."

Speaking at a seminar held in Nishtar Hall, Peshawar, to commemorate International Anti-Corruption Day, Barrister Dr. Saif highlighted the critical link between media, governance, and societal corruption. Addressing a distinguished audience comprising officials from FIA, NAB, Anti-Corruption, the State Bank, students, ministers, advisors, and secretaries, he shed light on the socio-economic causes of corruption and the pivotal role of media in combating it.

Dr. Saif differentiated between individual crimes and systemic corruption, stating that corruption is not merely a legal offense but a reflection of societal decay. "Punishing individuals alone cannot end corruption; we must address the root causes that foster such crimes. These causes are often tied to social injustices, lack of meritocracy, and systemic governance failures," he remarked.

Discussing the chal-

lenges societies face during transitions to capitalist systems, he said, "In such systems, unequal distribution of wealth sidelines ethical considerations. Resources concentrate in a few hands, leaving the majority in deprivation and distrust, which often leads to corruption."

On the role of media, Dr. Saif criticized the increasing commercialization of media in recent times. "The financial interests of media outlets compromise their impartiality and integrity. Commercialization has turned information into a commodity, where only profitable news is broadcast. This trend undermines the fundamental role of media," he said.

He stressed the need for an effective regulatory framework to ensure responsible media conduct. "The democratization of social media has promoted freedom of expression, but its misuse must be curbed through proper regulations to preserve its positive impact," he added. In conclusion, Dr. Saif underscored the importance of merit, justice, and transparent systems for eradicating corruption. "Corruption is a systemic issue that requires systemic solutions. By promoting merit and justice, we can build a society free from corruption," he stated.

Bilawal calls for united efforts to safeguard HRs

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has called for united efforts to safeguard and promote human rights as the cornerstone of a just, inclusive, and peaceful society.

In his message on the occasion of International Human Rights Day being observed globally on December 10, he said that human rights are universal rights and cannot be compromised anywhere.

Reflecting on the United Nations' 2024 theme, "Our Rights, Our Future, Right Now," Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari underscored

that the realization of human rights is pivotal for a sustainable and prosperous future. He stated, "Human rights are not mere ideals to aspire to but essential building blocks for dignity, equality, and justice. The future of any society depends on guaranteeing these rights to all individuals without discrimination."

In a press release issued by the Media Cell Bilawal House, Chairman PPP reiterated the Party's steadfast commitment to upholding the constitutional rights introduced in the landmark Constitution of 1973 by Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. He highlighted how

Quaid-e-Awam's vision of

"One citizen, one vote" laid the foundation for empowering the people as the true source of power in Pakistan.

He also praised the legacy of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, the first female Prime Minister of the Islamic world, who championed human rights through transformative initiatives. These included preventing gender discrimination by advancing women's autonomy, enacting laws to prevent honor killings and violence against women, repealing authoritarian-era laws to protect freedom of expression, and safeguarding the rights of minorities and workers.

Sindh govt working to create new employment opportunities: Sharjeel

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Anam Memon stated that the Sindh government is working to create new employment opportunities. "Today, we also met with global investors who have expressed interest in investing in the agriculture, health, transport, and energy sectors. In the health sector, we plan to establish a health city in Karachi, which will include research laboratories and facilities for manufacturing medical equipment.

Investors have pledged to invest one billion dollars in the medical sector alone, which includes purchasing land in the Dhabeji Economic Zone and setting up industries. This project is expected to create fifty thousand jobs for local residents," he added.

Addressing a press conference in Karachi, Sindh Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit, Sharjeel Inam Memon, stated, "No matter how much negative propaganda or conspiracies are spread, international investors remain interested in invest-

ing in Pakistan. Despite these challenges, global businessmen continue to have faith in the government and are prepared to invest in various sectors."

He stated that foreign investors are also keen to invest in the agricultural sector, acknowledging that the prices of fertilizers, seeds, and other inputs are very high, along with the costs of tube wells. "We aim to increase our agricultural productivity to match that of other nations. The Sindh government is working for people from all walks of life, and we have thoughtfully invited investors to come and invest here. Foreign investors have also shown significant interest in the energy sector. In addition to wind power generation, we are producing electricity from coal. Currently, coal offers the greatest potential for electricity generation, and Thar holds one of the largest coal reserves," he said.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that foreign investors have also shown interest in investing in the transport sector. "Meetings with investors are ongoing, and

another meeting is scheduled for tomorrow, Tuesday. We aim for these meetings to yield successful and beneficial outcomes for the common people, the country, the nation, and the province of Sindh. In the transport sector, the Karachi Circular Railway remains our top priority. Previously, we held discussions with Uting, one of the world's largest transport companies, about establishing a plant in Karachi to manufacture buses locally, thereby creating employment opportunities for the people," he said.

He stated, "We aim to introduce bullet trains, with plans for a route from Karachi to Sukkur, to make travel easier, more affordable, and time-saving for the people. Today, we also held discussions with investors regarding our bullet train project." Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated, "I have proposed to investors to implement the bullet train project in two phases. In the first phase, the bullet train should operate from Karachi to Hyderabad, and in the second phase, it should extend from Karachi to Sukkur. Pakistan offers numerous investment opportu-

nities, but unfortunately, our collective priorities often differ."

He said, "Regarding the Motor Vehicle Fitness Law, the federal and provincial governments of Pakistan have not played the role they should have. Now, we are taking concrete steps to address vehicle fitness issues. Two mechanisms are under consideration: either implementing a public-private partnership model or outsourcing the process to groups equipped with fitness machinery. The Sindh government is evaluating both options. Previously, there were only two inspectors for vehicle fitness checks; now there are twenty-two, but even this number is insufficient to inspect the fitness of millions of vehicles."

He stated, "It is the people's right to breathe in a clean environment, and it is the government's responsibility to ensure that right. We will soon introduce an effective solution. As a first step, we will ensure 100 percent fitness of all government vehicles, followed by the fitness of public and private transport." Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated, "Forty

additional bus stops for the People's Bus Service are being constructed in Karachi to ensure convenience for the public. I urge the people not to harass the bus staff, as the buses will only stop at designated bus stops."

He said, "Art is a significant sector, but unfortunately, cinema halls are closing in our country, and talented individuals are not getting opportunities to showcase their skills. The Information Department of the Sindh Government has established a board to provide opportunities for new talent in the field of art. This initiative aims to promote a positive narrative among the people. The Sindh Government is actively working to guide society towards constructive and positive thinking."

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated, "The Sindh Government is reserving a special quota for children with disabilities in schools. Special children will be admitted to all schools and should be integrated with general students. It is our collective responsibility to be good human beings and serve one another." He said, "The Sindh gov-

ernment has established the Sindh People's Rural Civic Services, under which efforts will be made to provide clean drinking water and sanitation to 61 percent of the population living in rural areas. The primary goal of Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is to ensure access to clean drinking water for people in both urban and rural areas. All problems in this country and society are important, and we all have a role to play in solving these issues and improving our society."

In response to a question, Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated, "The actions taken by the founder of PTI to harm Pakistan have not been his own desire; he receives instructions from somewhere. He is willing to do anything that could harm Pakistan. During the sit-in, Imran Khan launched a civil disobedience movement and encouraged people to engage in money laundering instead of using banking channels to send money abroad. He also tore up electricity bills and incited people not to pay them, causing significant losses to Pakistan."



Chinese business delegation explores investment opportunities in Sindh

KARACHI (APP): A 15-member Chinese business delegation met with Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah to explore investment opportunities in the province's various sectors.

The meeting highlighted the potential for collaboration in agriculture, renewable energy, livestock, and industrial production.

The meeting was held at the CM House and was attended by provincial ministers Sharjeel Memon and Nasir Shah, as well as other officials, including Syed Qasim Naveed, Secretary to the Chief Minister Rahim Shaikh, and Khurram Shahzad, Secretary of Investment.

The Chinese delegation included representatives from nine medical companies, such as Meng Xiaowei, Agricultural Biochar Cooperation's Dr M Shahbaz, and livestock specialist Hong Pizheng. Other members represented photovoltaic companies Wu Liangliang and Zhou Guohao, large-scale livestock importers Mr

Weng Gang, masterbatch businesses Liu Wenbo), as well as solar energy companies Xu Zhigang and the agriculture sector. Pakistani interpreters M. Ali Akbar, Li Wenjie, Idrees Gigi (leading the Chinese delegation), Sheikh Tehseen, and Muhammad Imran were also part of the group.

During discussions, Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah emphasised Sindh's strategic economic position, robust infrastructure, and policies designed to promote foreign investment. The delegation, representing industries including medical technology, biochar, livestock, photovoltaic energy, and manufacturing, expressed strong interest in forming partnerships with the Sindh government.

Mr Shah noted that there are numerous economic opportunities in Sindh, especially in the agriculture, renewable energy, and industrial sectors. He mentioned that the provincial government has established Special Economic Zones (SEZs),

including the operational Kahirpur SEZ and the under-development Dhabeji Economic Zone. He also highlighted investment-friendly policies and various incentives launched by the provincial government.

The visiting Chinese delegation discussed potential investments in several areas, including collaboration in medical technology and pharmaceuticals, advancements in bio-char for sustainable agriculture, opportunities in livestock farming and export, and renewable energy projects focused on solar and wind power.

The meeting concluded with the decision to form joint working groups for targeted projects. Chief Minister Shah assured the delegation of full support from the provincial government, emphasizing the importance of enhancing bilateral trade and investment. The discussions ended with optimism about future collaborations that promise economic prosperity for both Sindh and Chinese businesses.

Free solar system scheme starts

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab government on Monday regularly launched the free solar scheme for citizens, according to which, up to 200 units of 1100 watt solar panels will be provided. Through this scheme the government will provide free solar systems to consumers up to 200 units per month.

Consumers consuming 100 units per month will get a 550-watt solar system, CM office official sources informed APP Monday. Under the scheme, a 550-watt solar system will be provided to 52,019 households who consume up to 100 units per month, while a 1,100-watt solar system will be allocated to those who consume up to 200 units per month, they said.

Consumers can apply for the scheme through the online portal on the website or send their details through SMS to 8800. To apply in the portal, the electricity bill reference number will have to be given, the tenant will obtain NOC from the landlord. Solar panels will be issued in the name of the landlord only, while a computerised lottery will be conducted for the free solar panel scheme.

Sindh Minister Lanjhar visits Huawei headquarters in China



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Home Minister Ziaul Hasan Lanjhar visited the headquarters of Huawei Technology Limited in China today.

He was accompanied by Muhammad Iqbal Memon, Additional Chief Secretary (Home), SP Ahmed Chaudhry, PSO to the Minister for Home & Law, DIG Asif Aijaz Sheikh, Director General Sindh Safe Cities Authority, Bilaluddin Sheikh, Planning, Policy & Coordination Specialist (Home Department), Ms. Tabassum Abbasi, Chief Technical Officer, Sindh

Safe Cities Authority, and other officials.

The purpose of this visit was to evaluate and review the equipment required for the Karachi Safe City Project and hold meetings with senior officials of Huawei. It is worth mentioning that Huawei Technology Limited is supplying equipment for the Karachi Safe City Project. Recognized as one of the world's leading companies, Huawei's equipment is in high demand globally.

During the visit, Home Minister Ziaul Hasan Lanjhar inspected Huawei's Dongguan R&D City,

where he was shown demonstrations of medium and small-sized drones and other security-related advanced technologies.

These innovations can play a significant role in promoting technological advancement in Sindh. The home minister Ziaul Hasan Lanjhar said that this is the vision of President Asif Ali Zardari and the party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. The minister appreciated Huawei's technological capabilities and discussed future needs.

The provincial minister also visited Huawei's LTE/Network Equipment assembly line. Huawei officials briefed him on how the latest automated processes ensure efficiency, accuracy, and high-quality production. Huawei officials highlighted that their world-class technology is well-suited for projects like the Safe City initiative.

This visit is being hailed as a key milestone in promoting technology in Pakistan and ensuring the success of the Karachi Safe City Project.



KARACHI: Senior Minister Sindh Sharjeel Inam Memon addressing a press conference in Karachi.

LHC acquits 3 murder convicts

LAHORE (APP): A Lahore High Court (LHC) division bench on Monday acquitted three condemned prisoners in a murder case.

In 2014, Okara police registered a case against the convicts - Shafique, Ilyas, and Alam Sher - on charges of killing a citizen, Azhar Rasheed, during a robbery. An Okara sessions court sentenced them to death in 2021. The convicts filed appeals in the high court challenging the trial court's verdict.

During the proceedings, the defense counsel argued that the legal requirements were not met during the identification parade and that the appearances of the suspects were not recorded in the first information report. He contended that, despite these shortcomings, the trial court delivered a guilty verdict without proper judicial consideration. The counsel urged the court to overturn the verdict and acquit his clients.

In response, the prosecutor argued that the trial court had passed its judgment based on merit and tangible evidence. Subsequently, the bench, comprising Justice Muhammad Tariq Nadeem and Justice Muhammad Amjad Rafiq, allowed the appeals and acquitted the convicts.

Use of mobile phone in schools banned

LAHORE (APP): The use of mobile phones has been banned in government schools from Monday, across the province.

The School Education Department has also issued 20-point guidelines for discipline and a transparent teaching system. District and Tehsil Education Officers and school heads have been instructed to ensure implementation of the guidelines.

According to the new guidelines, teachers, students and non-teaching staff will submit mobile phones to the head teacher during teaching hours, it will be mandatory for staff to wear dress coats and closed shoes, teachers and students will wear their name badges.

The department has instructed that all will wear navy blue jerseys and students will wear uniforms, a time table board will be displayed at the main gate, there will be a CR for each class, and three or four pennants with different slogans will be installed in the school.

The guidelines state that students will use a register, there will be a box on one corner of the whiteboard for students present and absent and the subject, the subject being taught and important points will be listed on the board, however, students' nails and haircuts will be checked daily, teachers will wear watches, and attendance of all teachers, including the head, in the assembly will be mandatory.

KMC's General Council to meet on Dec 12

KARACHI (APP): The postponed general meeting of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation, under the chairmanship of Karachi Mayor Barrister Murtaza Wahab, will be held on December 12, at 2:30 pm in the Council Hall of the KMC Building, at M. A Jinnah Road.

Ashrafi urges preservation of existing DGRE system for Madaris

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman of the Pakistan Ulema Council, Allama Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, on Monday presented a unanimous resolution emphasizing the importance of preserving the current system of religious seminaries in Pakistan.

Addressing a gathering of prominent religious leaders and seminary board representatives, Ashrafi stressed that the Directorate General of Religious Education (DGRE) system must not be abolished or altered under any circumstances. He highlighted that millions of students rely on this system for their future and urged the government to resist any external pressure to change or dismantle it.

Ashrafi emphasized that the current madaris system, affiliated with the Ministry

of Education, is crucial for the academic and spiritual development of over three million seminary students across Pakistan.

Before 2019, there were only five seminary boards. The government changed its policy in response to our demand, deciding to grant the right to manage a board to those with the necessary capability. Our demand was for the government to officially recognize the education provided by seminaries. As a result, ten new boards were established, all of which are now functioning effectively.

"We are the guardians of this system," Ashrafi declared. "We cannot compromise on matters concerning the future of seminaries." He noted that the 2019 agreement, endorsed by scholars like Mufti Taqi Usmani, was a testament to their collective vision.

Ashrafi highlighted that

over 18,600 seminaries have trusted this system and registered with the Ministry of Education.

The meeting was attended by representatives from all schools of thought, including key figures such as Mufti Abdul Rahim, Khurram Nawaz Gandapur, and Allama Jawad Hussain Naqvi. The event also included remarks from federal ministers Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui and Chaudhry Salik Hussain, DGRE Project Director Major General (Retired) Dr. Ghulam Qamar, and other religious luminaries.

Ashrafi called for all seminary board leaders to be consulted before any laws are made on this matter. He concluded with an appeal to the government to strengthen the existing system, ensuring the welfare of millions of seminary students who are integral to Pakistan's future.

NAB recovers Rs 3.8 trillion in one year: Chairman

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Lt Gen Nazir Ahmed said on Monday that the Bureau has set a historic record by recovering Rs 3.8 trillion, or \$13.57 billion, in just one year.

Speaking at a special event in connection with Anti-Corruption Day, the NAB Chairman said that the Bureau had directly or indirectly recovered Rs 6.1 trillion since its establishment. He commended the outstanding performance of NAB Karachi, NAB Sukkur, and NAB KPK. NAB Karachi and Sukkur regions have collectively saved Rs 2.4 trillion and Rs 1.1 trillion, respectively, by recovering forest land across an area of 1.8 million hectares.

Similarly, NAB Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has achieved indirect and consequential savings of Rs 194.937 billion, he said. In addition, the NAB has processed 22,000 applications. Due to reforms, the filing of false complaints has been discouraged, leading to a reduction in such complaints from 4,000 per month to just 400 per month, the Chairman expressed.

The Chairman NAB emphasized that corruption, in any form, is the greatest barrier to sustainable development and economic prosperity. He reiterated NAB's commitment to fighting corruption, safeguarding national assets, recovering embezzled funds, and returning them to the public.

The event was attended by NAB Deputy Chairman Sohail Nasir, the UNODC Representative in Pakistan, and a large number of senior NAB officers. The NAB Chairman stated that 65 percent of the country's population is under the age of 30, and the youth represent the future. He highlighted that a comprehensive plan has been developed to engage them in the anti-corruption movement. To achieve this, a public aware-

ness program will be launched with the support of educational and research institutions, along with various stakeholders.

He mentioned that NAB is not only dedicated to combating corruption but has also shown exceptional performance in safeguarding national assets, recovering stolen funds, and returning them to the public.

The Chairman also noted that NAB has implemented a visitor feedback system, which not only aids in controlling corruption but also enhances the institution's performance. Additionally, work is being carried out in the power sector with the cooperation of National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA), and its positive impact will be felt soon.

He urged NAB officers to work with utmost dedication and enthusiasm to swiftly provide relief to victims in the real estate sector. The NAB Chairman also mentioned that NAB has signed MoUs with 10 countries to expedite the resolution of corruption cases. On the occasion, UNODC representative Troels Vester emphasized that youth are the future leaders of the anti-corruption movement. He stated that there are currently around 1.2 billion youth worldwide, and their active participation will play a crucial role in combating corruption. He also emphasized that corruption impacts every aspect of life, and all possible support will be extended to the efforts being made to address it in Pakistan.

Awards were presented to the top-performing NAB officers during the seminar. The awardees included Rashid Badar and Mirza Aleem Baig from NAB Karachi, Rafi Jan from NAB KP, Khattab Gul from NAB Sukkur, Rashid Badar from NAB Lahore, and Mohsin Haroon, Mian Umar Nadeem, and Umair Ahmed from NAB Rawalpindi.

Punjab to protect minorities' rights on priority basis: Arora

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Minister for Minority Affairs Ramesh Singh Arora has said that a formal road map for the protection of human rights has been formulated in Punjab and the provincial government will implement it with an aim to solve the challenges in this regard.

He said this while speaking on the occasion of the launching ceremony of Huqooq-e-Pakistan II project in connection with Human Rights Day at a hotel in Islamabad.

Prominent human rights experts, government officials and international representatives participated in the event. The purpose of the event was to focus on

inter-institutional cooperation for the promotion of human rights in Pakistan.

Ramesh Singh Arora said that Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has clearly said that the protection of the rights of minorities is the priority of her government and along with this attention is being paid to religious tourism. He said that human rights education plays an important role and helps in awareness and empowerment of minority groups.

The provincial minister emphasized the need for institutional cooperation, and said that effective implementation of human rights initiatives requires cooperation at all levels of

government and collaboration with civil society and international institutions.

Ramesh Singh Arora also discussed the importance of Pakistan's harmonization with international human rights standards and treaties. He said that the role of provinces, especially Punjab, is very important in the implementation of these standards.

The conference also featured several panel discussions, including the practical nature of the Business and Human Rights framework, inclusion of women's voices in human rights debates, and provinces' fulfillment of global human rights responsibilities.

Justice Abdul Rasheed calls for systemic overhaul to combat corruption

F.P. Report

SUKKUR: Justice Syed Abdul Rasheed Shah of the Sukkur Accountability Court said that corruption weakens the foundations of institutions, which hinders economic progress. The cause of corruption is the lack of strong institutions. Corruption cannot be cured with homeopathic treatment; it requires surgery. Until a system of punishment and reward is established, society will not improve.

He expressed these views while addressing an awareness seminar at Sukkur IBA University on the occasion of International Anti-Corruption Day. He said that corruption is a curse that affects the entire society and institutions. Corruption is not a political issue, but it is a social, economic, and moral issue that affects every aspect of life. Corruption also has negative effects on democracy.

He appreciated the hard work of the girls who delivered speeches, saying that our girls have worked very hard. While addressing the seminar, Director General NAB Sukkur Region Fayaz Ahmed Qureshi said that people think that after the amendment to the law, NAB can take action on amounts above 50 crore, and the amount below that has perhaps become halal for them. This is not the case at all. The National Accountability Bureau is doing its job.

He said that someone has talked about conducting surgery here. In China, the punishment for corruption is death. In China, the cost of the bullet used to execute the criminal is also recovered from the criminal. If surgery of this type is being talked about, then if two or four surgeries are performed here, society will be corrected. He said that individually, our situation is that the farmer does not work honestly on his lands, the doctor



treats patients based on the advice of pharmaceutical companies, and the teachers have stopped teaching.

He said that a year or two ago, the National Accountability Bureau was working on a case related to the Forest Department. When they examined the forest lands, they found that the land was not even registered in the name of the custodian, who were supposed to be the custodians of the land. Moreover, there was no entry of this land in the Record of Rights, which is a document that records the ownership and possession of land.

He said that when the valuation of this land was done, it was found that the land was worth more than 3 hundred billion rupees.

The government has been there for 72 years, but this land was not even entered in the Record of Rights. He said that I will not call it negligence, but no one paid attention to it. He mentioned another case, stating that last month, a land case worth 40 crore rupees was resolved. The land had fake documents, and it was located within the motorway. The person who made the fake documents had passed away. The land's record was corrected, and it was transferred to the Sindh government.

He mentioned another case where an officer created fake pension bills in the

names of his sisters, sisters-in-law, and other relatives. He also created fake GP fund claims and got all of them retired at least 7 to 11 times. All these people are now our accused, he said.

He stated that children demand iPhone 15 and 16 from their parents, and parents try to fulfill their children's wishes so that they don't get disappointed. They try to get them iPhones worth more than 5 lac rupees. Director General NAB Sukkur, Fayaz Ahmed Qureshi, said that if parents get them iPhones, you should definitely ask where they got the phone from.

He expressed hope in the younger generation, saying that they will play their role in fixing the country.

Senior Director National Accountability Bureau Sukkur, Muhammad Rafique Memon, stated that December 9 holds great significance. He added that Pakistan ranks 133 out of 180 countries in the Corruption Index, with its passport ranking 107, which is alarming. He emphasized that due to corruption, our great nation is deteriorating day by day. Memon stressed that eliminating corruption is impossible without the involvement of the new generation.

He urged unity among all to rescue the country from this quagmire. Spokesperson for the Sindh government and Mayor

Sukkur, Barrister Arsalan Islam Shaikh stated that for over eight years, we have been celebrating International Anti-Corruption Day, making some resolutions, and appreciating the efforts of National Accountability Bureau officers, who have worked tirelessly for the greater good of the country.

The Sindh government stands firmly with the National Accountability Bureau at every forum, and together, they will combat corruption. The seminar organized by the National Accountability Bureau Sukkur is a commendable initiative, as it brings together government officials, public representatives, and young people from various educational institutions to unite against corruption. Commissioner Sukkur, Fayaz Hussain Abbasi, and Member Sindh Public Service Commission, Qazi Shahid Pervez, also addressed the seminar.

Earlier, in the seminar, students delivered speeches in English, Urdu, and Sindhi to mark International Anti-Corruption Day. In English, Sania Waheed secured the first position, Ayesha Abid secured the second position, while Salma and Nasser Somro secured the third position. In Urdu, Amna secured the first position, Namra Aziz secured the second position, while Bilal Mumtaz secured the third position. In Sindhi, Fazal-ur-Rehman secured the first position, Shahista secured the second position, and Kanwal Khoso secured the third position.

On this occasion, certificates and shields were awarded to students who secured positions in the speech competitions. Also NAB officers who demonstrated excellent performance, as well as representatives from various departments also awarded certificates and shields.

Speakers urged for prevention of early child marriages



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: As part of the global 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, The Department of Criminology, University of Peshawar in collaboration with the Group Development Pakistan (GDP), and Student's Societies, University of Peshawar, hosted a significant event focused on advocating for the legislation of the Child Marriage Restraint Act (CMRA). The event emphasized the importance of collective efforts to eliminate child marriage in Pakistan, with a special focus on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP).

The gathering brought together policymakers, academics, civil society organizations (CSOs), and students to discuss actionable solutions for ending child marriage.

The program began with remarks by a youth activist

Ali Hassan, who provided a historical perspective on the campaign against child marriage. He emphasized the importance of such initiatives for policy advocacy and awareness raising and lauded stakeholders for their commitment to the cause.

Mr. Imran Takkar, Provincial Coordinator for GDP, highlighted the alarming global and national statistics on child marriage. He noted, "Globally, at least 12 million girls under the age of 18 are married every year—that's 28 girls every minute. In Pakistan, 18.3% of marriages involve girls below the age of 18, and 3.6% of these girls are under 15 years old. This contributes to Pakistan having the highest neonatal mortality rate in South Asia." He stressed the need for proactive, collaborative approaches to address this issue.

Mr. Ijaz Muhammad

Khan, Deputy Chief of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Child Protection and Welfare Commission (KPCPWC), discussed the commission's efforts in preventing child marriages. He highlighted their work in raising awareness, implementing legal interventions, and providing rehabilitation for victims.

Ijaz Muhammad Khan further stated that we are committed to bringing a progressive law on early marriage aligned with the UNCRC. However, there is a need for mass awareness on the issue of early marriage to ensure that there are no challenges in implementing the law within the cultural context of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

While Speaking on the role of youth in the movement, Prof. Dr. Basharat Hussain, Chair of the Department of Criminology, emphasized the critical role young people play in combatting

child marriage. "Youth engagement during the 16 Days of Activism is vital. Their involvement can significantly advance the fight against child marriage," he said. Student presentations also added a powerful voice to the discussion.

Ms. Maryam Wahab addressed the socio-economic factors driving early marriages, urging greater community awareness.

Ms. Romaysa Hashmi explored the adverse effects of child marriage on girls' education and economic opportunities, calling for stronger legislative action.

The event concluded with remarks by Mr. Said Rehman, Director operation KP Local Government & Rural Development Department (LGRDD). He spoke about strengthening the nikah registration mechanism, oversight measures, and capacity building for nikah registrars.

A call for unity and reform was the message. The event provided a critical platform for dialogue among key stakeholders. By fostering collaboration and amplifying youth voices, it significantly contributed to the advocacy for legislative reforms to end child marriage in Pakistan. The discussions underscored the need for sustained efforts to create a united front against child marriage and drive meaningful, long-term change.



PESHAWAR: Members of the Young Parliamentarians Forum (YFP) in a group photo with Speaker Babar Saleem Swati during their visit to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly.

YPF delegation visits provincial assembly

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A delegation of the Young Parliamentarians Forum (YFP) of the National Assembly visited the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, where Speaker Babar Saleem Swati warmly welcomed the delegation led by Syeda Nosheen Iftikhar. Upon their arrival, Syeda Nosheen Iftikhar expressed her gratitude to Speaker Babar Saleem Swati for the excellent arrangements and the warm reception.

During the meeting, Speaker Babar Saleem Swati emphasized the need for unity for the survival of Pakistan. He stated that as

political workers, it is their responsibility to protect the rights of the people. The Speaker highlighted that the primary role of legislators is to make laws, and when legislation is genuinely done in the national and public interest, Pakistan will naturally move in the right direction.

Speaker Babar Saleem Swati also thanked Speaker of the National Assembly Ayaz Sadiq and National Assembly Officer Shamoon Hashmi for their cooperation in preparing the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial Assembly Employees Bill for the first time.

The meeting also included discussions on

establishing a Young Parliamentarians Forum within the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly. Syeda Nosheen Iftikhar stated that the purpose of the forum is to empower young parliamentarians to effectively address social and legislative issues. She reiterated that the Young Parliamentarians Forum would provide a crucial platform for addressing youth issues across the country.

Furthermore, she announced that by February, Young Parliamentarians Forums would be established in all provinces, followed by a national-level seminar.

The Young

Parliamentarians were given a tour of the Assembly Hall, and Special Secretary Syed Waqar Shah briefed them on the historical aspects of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly in the Old Jirga Hall. He also informed the members about the Information Technology project, which has made the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly the first paperless assembly in the country.

At the end of the ceremony, Speaker Babar Saleem Swati and Members of the KP Assembly presented gifts to the visiting delegation, and a commemorative group photo was taken.

Ihtesham issues stern orders against delayed medicine supply firms

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: On the directives of Advisor to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Health Ihtesham Ali, stern action is being initiated against pharmaceutical firms failing to ensure timely delivery of medicines. District Health Officers (DHOs) and Medical Superintendents (MSs) have been instructed to enforce the orders strictly.

During a recent DHOs'

conference, the Health Advisor emphasized that firms failing to comply with delivery schedules must face penalties, including blacklisting. Following this directive, Health Secretary Adeel Shah and Director General Health Dr. Muhammad Saleem Khan have reiterated the importance of swift action to uphold the supply chain's integrity.

In line with these instructions, a letter issued by the office of

Additional Director General for Monitoring and Evaluation, Dr. Abid, directed all DHOs and MSs to initiate disciplinary proceedings against firms responsible for delays in delivering medicines, disposable items, and other medical equipment under the allocated emergency budget for the fiscal year 2023-24.

The letter further underscores the need to blacklist non-compliant pharmaceutical companies

to ensure accountability. Moreover, it advises authorities to promptly place new orders for the approved medicines listed in the MCC's 2024-25 list to avoid future disruptions in healthcare services.

The Health Department remains committed to ensuring an uninterrupted supply of essential medical resources to protect the well-being of the public and enhance the healthcare delivery system.

DG NIPA urges public servants to be friendly with people

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Public servants should be friendly with the people. Professional training at NIPA are meant to enhance professional skills of the public servants and bring positive attitudinal changes.

These views were expressed by Director General NIPA, PPSA and PARD Peshawar Capt. (Retd.) Usman Gul while addressing the inaugural ceremony of the 42nd Mid-Career Management Course here at NIPA

Complex. The ceremony was attended by Chief Instructors and faculty members of the three training institutes and administrative staff.

The Director General highlighted that NIPA Peshawar has been doing a great national service by imparting quality training to the public servants and enhancing their skills towards better public service delivery under the kind leadership of Dr. Ijaz Munir, Rector NSPP.

He said that 42 officers in BS-18 are participating

in the training. He added that these officers belong to all the four provinces, the federal government and government of Gilgit Baltistan.

He stressed upon the trainee officers to focus on taking maximum benefits from the training for their personal and professional development which, in turn, will enable them to be better public servants.

He appreciated the efforts of the NIPA faculty and said that MCMC is a meticulously designed course and the competent faculty conduct and imple-

ment the course in a professional way.

He urged the participants to observe the SOPs designed for the course which will turn the course very productive. He said that all the training courses at NSPP are not less than any foreign training in quality. These trainings are with low cost and are tailored to our local needs and requirements.

Later, the Chief Instructor Dr. Muqem Ul Islam gave the trainee officers a detailed briefing about the modalities of the training.

District Kolai-Palas observes anti-corruption day

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In line with the provincial government's directives, the district administration of Kolai-Palas, under the leadership of Deputy Commissioner ishtiaq Ahmad, organized a seminar and walk to mark Anti-Corruption Day. The event was attended by a large number of participants, including the Deputy Commissioner, District Police Officer, Additional Deputy Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner Palas, district officers, anti-corruption staff, local notables, and individuals from all walks of life.

During the seminar, participants expressed their views on anti-corruption.



tion, followed by a walk where participants carried play cards and banners inscribed with slogans such as "Corruption-Free Pakistan" and "Our Faith, Corruption-Free Pakistan". The primary objective of the walk was to raise awareness about the elimination of corruption and bribery from society.

Deputy Commissioner ishtiaq Ahmad, while addressing the occasion, said that corruption is a curse that leads to the destruction of societies. He emphasized that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has established various platforms to eradicate corruption and urged the public to lodge complaints promptly.

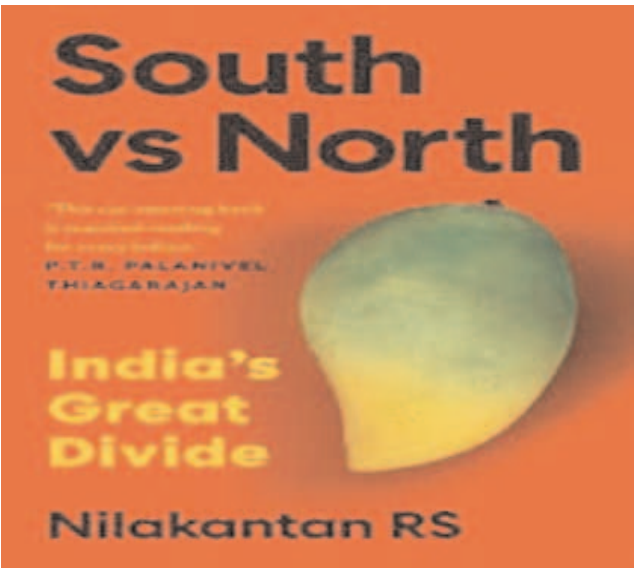


South Vs North: India's Great Divide - A book worth reading

Book Review by Azka Hamid

IMAGINE being born in a region with good education, good health facilities, and a good economy but still suffering because your government is undermining your region's progress. Author Nilakantan R.S., a data scientist, strives to explain this disparity in his book 'South vs North: India's Great Divide' by giving insight into the detrimental consequences of policies enforced by the BJP government, contributing to the burden on the southern region. This deepens regional inequalities and undermines the overall progress and well-being of the southern states.

The book is structured into three parts. The author explores three major indicators in the first part: health, education, and economy. He compares the developmental progress of the North and South, and through comparative data, explains why the South is outperforming the North. In the second part, he criticises the policies that adversely affected the South;



in the last part, he proposes alternative strategies to rectify these issues.

The book asks, "How far is the North from the South on health, education, and economy?" It addresses this question by thoroughly analysing the socio-economic disparities between South and North India. The author utilises compelling data to highlight significant challenges India faces in the contemporary era.

To underscore the importance of health, he highlighted the Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), explaining how India performs poorly in IMR compared to other South Asian states. For instance, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, the southern states, achieved an IMR of 7 and 15, respectively, comparable to the US IMR of 6.

Northern states exhibit significantly higher IMRs, such as Madhya Pradesh, 48, and

Uttar Pradesh, 43. These figures are alarmingly close to those observed in war-torn countries like Afghanistan and Nigeria.

The book's comparative data draws attention to the profound regional disparity within India. Southern states' lower IMRs reflect their better health facilities and policies. Conversely, the higher IMRs in northern states indicate their poor healthcare initiatives.

Source: mapsofworld.com

The book transitions seamlessly from discussing health to exploring the realm of education, skillfully explaining how the education sector in the South is again ahead of the North. The system focuses on getting children to attend school and addressing hunger issues by feeding them. Northern states are still in stage one of improving their learning outcomes, while southern states have progressed to stage two. However, the National Education Policy, which is centrally sponsored, has imposed a standardised approach that inhibits state governments from tailoring education policy to meet the requirements of their specific regions, and such initiatives hinder the develop-

ment of southern states. The graph represents how nearly every age group in Kerala is literate. Meanwhile, Tamil Nadu has a reasonable literacy rate among young adults and a lower percentage for older people. However, Northern states like Uttar Pradesh and Assam also have significant harmful residuals, indicating poor performance.

The author's main argument is that educational policies in the South are driven by sub-nationalism and a strong sense of local identity, which played a pivotal role in their success.

The third indicator is the economy; the book analyses how southern states have transitioned from agriculture to industries introduced higher-paying services and improved living standards. The analysis primarily focuses on southern states like Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, which have attracted investments in the manufacturing and technology sectors, helping them prosper financially. On the other hand, northern states have made very little progress towards industrialisation and remain predominantly agrarian.

In the book's second part, a significant portion is devoted

to determining why the Southern states' policy implementation has been more effective. The author discusses India's federal system, where the central government controls more money and power. The author has praised the administrative capacities of southern bureaucracies and their ability to formulate and implement effective policies.

This section provides a nuanced assessment of the socio-political and historical context that shaped the governance within this region.

Lastly, the book focuses on re-examining the inefficiencies in India's representative system and its power dynamics favouring the central government taking control of the union. Southern states suffer more from such policies, which have politically marginalised them despite their economic contributions.

Examining the impending electoral division and its potential impact on Southern political representation at the national level provides essential depth to the analysis.

Therefore, the author has proposed a model of "gamified democracy", which will act as a tool to develop a decen-

tralised system where autonomy will be in the hands of the local governments and citizens can be directly involved in law-making through a regulated and structured process. However, implementing such a system will be under question due to policymakers' inflexible interests and the proposed model's complex structure.

To conclude, "SOUTH VS NORTH: India's Great Divide" is a diligently researched and well-argued book. However, its most compelling argument critiques the central government's policies under the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party). The author claims that the size-fits-all approach has hindered the southern states' development and aggravated the regional fault lines. Despite the South being the highest contributor of taxes, they are not receiving a rightful share, and their development in various sectors is being undermined. The government must adopt a more nuanced and impartial approach to policymaking to meet the diverse needs of each state and prevent the marginalisation of the South.

Writer can be reached at azkahamid.207@gmail.com



In brief

CPDI holds briefing F.P. Report

BUNER: Chairman RDO said that this year anti-corruption week is celebrated with theme "Union with Youth against Corruption: Shaping the integrity of the future", on Monday. According to him the briefing was arranged with assistance of the CPDI with aim to convey the message to Youth through media persons. He repeated this year's theme highlights the important role of youth in eradicating corruption and promoting integrity, in which the role of the media is very important. Hakeem Zada said that the purpose of celebrating of anti-corruption week is to make it clear that corruption is recognized as a major obstacle to development, democracy and good governance and to highlight its importance. He said that 190 countries, including Pakistan, have agreed on effective measures against corruption.

Serving humanity a moral duty F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: Qari Hafiz Ghulam Rasool Chishti said that it is our moral duty to serve humanity because the peace that comes from serving human is indescribable. Our religion also allows that if a person is in trouble, he should be helped. He further said that Muslim brothers should immediately help someone who is in trouble. Helping someone does not reduce a person's honor, but increases his honor in the eyes of man and in the eyes of Allah. Qari Hafiz Ghulam Rasool said that nowadays every human being is suffering from problems and this is the reason why we have left the path of Allah and are adopting the customs created by the world. I want to give a message to all my brothers that, Our God, let us live our lives in the way that our Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) told us, that is the best and salvation.

UC chairman arrested

HYDERABAD (INP): The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has arrested Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) Union Council (UC) chairman in Hyderabad for posting against state institutions on social media. As per details, FIA arrested Shakib Qaimkhani, chairman Union Council 115 in Shah Latif Town, for doing anti-state propaganda. According to FIA, Shakib Qaimkhani consistently shared posts on social media platforms targeting state institutions. A cyber-crime case has been registered against him. Sources have claimed over a dozen people have been booked for anti-state posts on social media platforms. It is to be noted that the government of Pakistan has decided to amend the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) to tackle the spread of false information and fearmongering on social media, with penalties including imprisonment and fines.

Anti-corruption walk organized F.P. Report

DIKHAAN: Rescue 1122 Dera Ismail Khan organized walks at its offices in connection with the International Anti-Corruption Day here on Monday. These walks were held at the district office and Station 33 which aimed at raising awareness against corruption and to promote transparency and accountability. The walks were led by District Emergency Officer Engineer Fasihullah and attended by Rescue 1122 officers and workers.

Empowered LG system vital for eradication of graft

F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: Civil society stressed the need for effective governance mechanisms, access to information laws and strong local governments to eradicate corruption from the country. Community Development Organisation programme manager Inayatullah Khan told journalists after a meeting here on Monday that discouraging corruption and promoting a culture of accountability was the need of the hour.

He said that the country needed an accountability system where public officials could be questioned and the media was free to play its role to eliminate corruption and bring facts to light.

Terming corruption a major obstacle to development, democracy and good governance, he said that the fight against corruption in Pakistan had seen challenges as well as improvements. He referred to the Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index and he said that Pakistan's ranking had improved from 140th position in 2022 to 133rd in 2023.

He said that various laws had been enacted in Pakistan to take effective measures against corruption, including the Anti-Corruption Act and the National Accountability Ordinance.

"Under the recent amendments, the scope of the National Accountability Bureau has been limited to cases in which the amount of corruption exceeds Rs 500 million, which is a matter of concern", he revealed. He asked the anti-corruption bodies to implement relevant laws with true spirit to curb the menace of corruption and malpractices.

Meanwhile, Lakki Marwat Deputy Commissioner Zeeshan Abdullah led an

awareness rally in Lakki City on Monday to mark International Anti-Corruption Day. The rally started from the school building and converged at Kargil Chowk on the lorry adda. The participants held banners inscribed with anti-corruption related awareness messages.

On the occasion, the deputy commissioner said that corruption was the main obstacle in the economic stability of the country. He asked the people from all segments of society to join hands with the government to eliminate corruption from the society. Also in the day, speakers at a seminar have called for adherence to the teachings of Islam to purge society of malpractices and evils and promote good, transparency and trustworthiness.

The seminar was arranged by the district administration and education department with the support of the boy scouts association at Government Shaheed Muhammad Ghassan Khan Centennial Model High School No 1 in Lakki city on Monday to mark international anti-corruption day. Speakers included deputy DEO Shoukat Ali Khan, district khateeb Maulana Abdul Wahab, Mufti Ihsanur Rehman, educationists Muhammad Haroon, Muhammad Yousaf and Jamil Ahmad Khan. They said that evils were flourishing in the society due to distance from Islamic injunctions.

"Corruption is also an evil and nearness to the religion is the only way to eliminate it", they maintained. They said that when Pakistan came into existence, there was no corruption in the country. "We should think about why this menace now has deep roots in all institutions", they questioned, saying that everyone should focus on their self-accountability to eradicate corruption.

AWKUM professors awarded

F.P. Report

MARDAN: A special ceremony was held in the faculty members of Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan who received the Best Researcher Award of Pakistan Academy of Science for 2024.

Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Zahir Shah Professor Dr. Aurangzeb Professor Dr. Sher Afzal Professor Dr. Saeedul Islam Professor Dr. Fatima Khanzada Dr. Abid Dr. Saleem Abdullah Dr. Tariq Mahmood Registrar Hasan Khan were present on this occasion.

Prof. Dr. Zahir Shah appreciated the efforts of Prof. Dr. Saeedul Islam, Prof. Dr. Salim Abdullah, Dr. Abid and Dr. Fahad. He said that thanks to

these scientists, and said that these are the real assets of university. Abdul Wali Khan University has achieved a prominent position across the country. Vice-Chancellor Prof. Dr. Zahir Shah distributed certificates and shields to the gold medal winning faculty members and lunch is given in their honour.

Awareness session held: An awareness program on the harmful effects of drugs, especially ice, was organized at Government High School Labor Colony, on Monday. The aim of the program was to educate the youth about the dangers and effects of drugs, especially ice, so that they can avoid this devastating scourge. SHO Abdul Salam in his

address said that ice drug is ruining the lives of the young generation and we have to work together to eradicate it. He requested the students not only to protect themselves from this menace but also to inform their friends and family about its dangers.

SHO said that the aim of this campaign is to reduce the negative effects of ice and encourage the youth to move forward for a better future. He said that with such awareness campaigns we can fulfill our social responsibility and give our youth a safe and prosperous future. Police officials said the campaign will continue across the region to curb the use of ice and other drugs and rid the society of this scourge.

Residents hold protest against youth death

F.P. Report

LARKANA: The relatives of a youth who allegedly died mysteriously in the lockup of FIA Cyber Crime Sukkur Police Station protested against the non-release of the post-mortem report in front of the press club and shouted slogans.

Addressing the demonstration on that occasion, the parents of the deceased youth, Ghulam Hussain Sheikh, along with his son Irfan Kamran Ali Sheikh, protested and said that about 4 months ago, my 24-year-old son was killed by the residents of Bheens Colony. The young son of Ejaz Ali Shaikh had filed an appli-

cation with the cyber crime of FIA Sukkur, accusing him of talking to women on the phone.

FIA arrested my son and took him to Sukkur. They said that the FIA had demanded a bribe for my son's release, which was not paid. While my son has been tortured and killed in the lockup. We have conducted the post mortem of the young man but his post mortem report has not been released yet. That the young man died due to violence so that we can get justice.

Almost nine persons held: A crackdown has been launched against criminals in Larkana Range, in this, the police

recovered a large quantity of weapons and stolen cars and motorcycles.

While releasing the details of the exports in the 12-hour operations, the spokesman said that the range police arrested 9 people involved in crimes, while carrying out operations in different areas of the range, 3 rifles were seized, 20 rifle magazines, 7 Kalashnikovs and 35 magazines, 5 pistols and guns, 15 lens shooters, 2 cars and 3 motorcycles were recovered. DIG Police Range Larkana awarded certificates of appreciation to the staff for the successful operations of the range police. were released.



QUETTA: Head of Fazal Muhammad Foundation, Fazal Muhammad Noorzai along with drug addicts addressing a press conference.

American gets markhor hunting permit for record \$271,000

CHITRAL (INP): An American hunter has hunted the first markhor of the season in Chitral, making history by bidding the highest amount ever in Pakistan's hunting history. According to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Wildlife Department Divisional Forest Officer, American citizen Ronald Joe Whitton paid a record \$271,000 to obtain the permit for hunting a markhor.

Whitton hunted the markhor on Sunday under the supervision of wildlife officials in the Thoshi Shasha Conservancy area of Chitral. The hunted markhor was 11 years old, with horns measuring 49.5 inches in length. The wildlife department sold four permits for hunting the national animal for the Thoshi One and Thoshi Two conservancies being sold for a record \$271,000 each.

The markhor is a large wild Capra (goat) species native to South Asia and Central Asia, mainly within Pakistan, the Karakoram range, parts of Afghanistan, and the Himalayas. It is listed on the IUCN Red List as Near Threatened since 2015.

In Pakistan, it is also known as the screw-horn or screw-horned goat. The word markhor, meaning "snake-eater", comes from both Pashto and classical Persian languages, referencing the ancient belief that it would actively kill and consume snakes. This regional myth is believed to stem from the "snake-like" form of the male animal's horns, twisting and curling like a snake, possibly leading ancient peoples to associate them with snakes. On May 2, 2024, the United Nations General Assembly declared May 24 the International Day of the Markhor.

Delivery boy crushed to death

WAH CANTT (INP): A teenage delivery boy has been crushed to death by a speedy dumper on GT road near Chachi mohallah in the limits of Wah Saddar police station.

The police said a speedy dumper recklessly rammed over 17-year-old Bilal Sultan, resulting in his body torn into pieces.

Afghan Refugee students awarded

F.P. Report

BUNER: A parent day organized at Afghan Refugee Camp School in Buner while special guest Assistant Commissioner Mandanr Maryam Bukhtawar distributed awards and prizes among the position holder students.

The ceremony was attended by Sub Divisional Education Officer Saeed Mahmood, Helvetas field officer Muhammad Alam, Madam Shaheen, Afghan Shura president Haji Ghamay and Peerzada Zadrana along with parents and students.

During the ceremony, children presented speeches, recited poems, and sang songs, highlighting the importance of education. The participants praised the efforts of Helvetas Pakistan in providing education to Afghan refugee children.

Maryam Bukhtawar emphasized the significance of education, stating that it is our basic need. She commended Helvetas Pakistan for their efforts in educating Afghan refugee children and expressed hope that this initiative will continue to grow.



Helvetas Pakistan's Field Officers Muhammad Alam and Shaheen stated that the organization is currently providing education to 3,720 children in 68 centers across six districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including 600 children from the Koga camp. They mentioned that these children were previously collecting garbage and were deprived of education due to poverty. Helvetas Pakistan also provides free books, uniforms, shoes, and sports equipment to the students.

The organizers expressed their commitment to starting middle school education with the help of their donors. They have already enrolled 600 children who passed the fifth grade into other middle schools in the area, with 60% of them being girls.

Afghan Shura leaders Peer Zada Zdran, Haji Ghamay Nasiri, Nazak Mir and Malak Sardar Wali thanked Helvetas Pakistan for their efforts, stating that the organization has achieved in a short time what others could not. They requested Helvetas Pakistan and its donors to expand their services to include middle school education, enabling these children to become useful citizens of society.

The ceremony concluded with the distribution of shields to outstanding students, teachers, and guests, and Pir Zada Zdran presented a cash award of PKR 5,000 to the chief guest then she donated the prize to the students while Haji Ghamay had provided cash prize to Helvetas Pakistan team for their excellent performance.

UNDP Pakistan hosts stakeholders' workshop

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: UNDP Pakistan's Scaling Up of Glacial Lake Outburst Flood Risk Reduction in Northern Pakistan Project (GLOF-II) organized a divisional level Stakeholders' Communication and Coordination Workshop in Swat on Monday.

This divisional-level event brought together community members and key representatives from government departments to tackle communication and coordination challenges in addressing the impacts of climate change and disaster risk reduction.

Participants included officials from Planning and Development Department, Provincial Disaster Management Authority, On-Farm Water Management, Climate Change, Forestry Environment and Wildlife Department, Environmental Protection Agency, Pakistan

Meteorological Department, Soil and Water Conservation Department and community members from Upper and Lower Chitral, Upper Dir and Swat.

The workshop aimed to advance dialogues between stakeholders involved in the project's implementation across its targeted valleys. It provided a platform for community members from four districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to share insights, voice concerns, and exchange experiences.

The discussions led to identifying key communication and coordination challenges and developing actionable strategies to address them. The event also strengthened relationships among stakeholders, promoting trust and collaboration.

"This workshop not only brought together community members from various districts but also gave us a plat-

form to exchange ideas, concerns, and lessons learned. Seeing government officials keenly listen to our concerns and commit to addressing them was truly encouraging," shared Rashida Khanum, a resident of Reshun Valley, Upper Chitral.

UNDP's GLOF-II project works in 16 valleys of Gilgit Baltistan and 08 valleys of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It empowers communities to identify and manage risks associated with GLOFs and related impacts of climate change, strengthens public services to lower the risk of disasters related to GLOFs, and improves community preparedness and disaster response. The project also supports the development of sustainable livelihood options in project areas, with a particular focus on the participation of women in ensuring food security and livelihoods.

NGOs need to be revised

THUS, innumerable NGOs have been working and are doing, and the commendable and proud work is as clear as day, but like every sector, there are black sheep in this sector, especially in promoting education. Many so-called NGOs or organizations have adopted intolerable behavior in the name of big and ugly things.

Say my luck that my personal experience has been with these reliable organizations. Tell me about so-called and fake institutions that didn't take long to recognize because the secret was also revealed that not only for their interest but for the better future of their entire family, the future of the entire nation is being put at stake.

All the policies of these institutions are also under the same principle compiled, fictitious names, fictitious schools, fictitious places, fictitious offices, fictitious officials, etc. Earlier I thought that perhaps such a big fraud or deception in the name of the promotion of education is not possible. Payment of annuity While health, and poverty allevi-

ation for any basic need such as water, electricity, and means of transportation are hypothetically and temporarily possible, here also everything is possible in the promotion of education.

Let's first, let's put the institutions with which I and my reliable sources have been director directly related. I also started my professional teaching at an NGO.TCF i.e. The Citizen's Foundation is undoubtedly doing a great job in bringing about a silent educational revolution, promoting education in Pakistan, as much as this organization has done, hardly any other organization has done it personally. I have been attached and all the authorities in our country have worked in various positions in this institution for about ten years and his services at every position and every level have been commendable. TCF is doing great job of transition of life. A very wide network spread across Pakistan is preparing the future of millions of children in every possible way to face all the challenges of the future.

Now I will mention an organization that not only has been my personal experience but its services are also obvious to every Pakistani and that is Zindagi Trust. What made leh so special was the adoption of government schools and a standard education system and implemented it the special thing is that these two institutions are only for girls because we give utmost importance to boys because of the background of our social values and attitudes and our thinking about daughters is completely different.

Although the change in this unfair thinking has started, this is just the beginning of the change, the destination is still far away. In such a situation, the work of Zindagi Trust is a very positive and desirable step. You will see the same in the institution as you will not see in any other private institution, especially in the field of sports, the institution has a special place throughout Karachi. I personally and many reputable institutions are eyewitnesses to the fact that

every modern research and method is being used here for the students. Life Trust staff and Government staff in this regard as necessary and useful working diligently which is commendable.

The third major organization is the Kiran Foundation, whose services in the higher education of their children and other training issues are commendable among the thinking of people with special genius in a backward area like Lyari. Had an opportunity to briefly review the services of this institution in the month of Ramadan. Their school, their teachers, and all their work are commendable.

Now one such institution which is doing the first and complete work of its kind on teacher training is to prepare high-quality teachers by providing four years of the free standard professional education of B.Ed. to the girls of Durbin Inter pass girls and then to train them with respect and quality. Managing employment is also a good step undertaken by this institution to

prepare good and trained teachers for improving the quality of education in a country like Pakistan is a great responsibility.

Now let's look at the role of some so-called NGOs, which are spending huge amounts of money on their interests in the name of huge help or funding from home and abroad. Every official in these organizations at every level seems to be working for their interests, but after building his reputation for a long time, fake work, fake organizations, fake visits, and fake training courses are all happening and still hidden from the eyes of the concerned institutions. It is a strange logic. It is an unfair and unforgivable crime to make the funding of institutions like the Sindh Government, Sindh Education Foundation, and Asian Development Bank the fiefdom of a few selected people.

According to the most reliable sources, the facts are alarming, an institution is not only in Karachi but also in some institutions in the interior of Sindh, one

of them is an important institution that has schools in Orangi Town and Korangi areas of Karachi.

The names of these so-called institutions can also be published if necessary, according to reliable sources, the story of the schools in Sindh is something like this: books do not reach the children in their schools until February, or March, in the name of syllabus coverage, the staff in the villages reply that there are no books here. Nor does any syllabus outline then what and how syllabus coverage reports.

This was the revelation of the sources who were serving as important officials of the organization and while taking the basic information due to being a new employee, the revelation took the ground from under their feet. How many organizations are there that are doing this kind of heinous work. We have to raise our voices against such activities of these institutions and my sources will consider it their duty to provide all kinds of support because good and positive institutions have to be appreciated, supported, and the voice of their conscience.



US caught by surprise as Syria overthrows al-Assad

WASHINGTON: A lightning-quick offensive has seen Syria's opposition take control of major cities and large swaths of territory, toppling the government of longtime leader President Bashar al-Assad and indelibly altering the war-torn country's future.

The events represent a remarkable reversal of fortunes in Syria and enlivened a multipronged civil war that appeared largely stagnant for years. The situation, analysts told Al Jazeera, also appears to have been largely unanticipated by the administration of United States President Joe Biden, and raises galling questions over how Washington will proceed in the weeks and months ahead.

"I think everything that's happening caught them by surprise," Qutaiba Ildibi, a senior fellow at the Washington, DC-based Atlantic Council, told Al Jazeera. "So many of us analysts and Syria watchers have been wondering what's going to come next." "[The Biden administration] will need to recalibrate their approach to Syria," added Ildibi, who is also a Syrian refugee. But that is all but assured to be constrained by Biden's diminished power before he hands over the office in January to president-elect Donald Trump, he said.

"I feel that the events on the ground are moving way too quickly for them to catch up, especially in this lame-duck session." Speaking - hours after opposition groups led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) entered the Syrian capital of Damascus and sent al-Assad fleeing the country - Biden gave his first response to what he described as both a moment of "historic opportunity" and "risk and uncertainty". Biden said the end of al-Assad's presidency was in part due to US support for Israel's war on Gaza and its fight against Hezbollah in Lebanon, as well as support for groups in Syria and Iraq that weakened Syria's close ally, Iran. He also pointed to US support for Ukraine's war against Russia's invasion, which siphoned resources from Moscow, a close ally of al-Assad: "The upshot of all of this, for the first time ever, neither Russia [nor] Iran or Hezbollah could defend this abhorrent regime in Syria," Biden said. Looking ahead, Biden said Washington would prioritise supporting Syria's neighbours - including Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Israel.

He said US forces would remain in northeast Syria, where they support the Kurdish-led Syrian Defence Forces against ISIL (ISIS). About 900 US troops

are currently in the northeast of the country. Finally, Biden pledged to engage "with all Syrian groups", while vowing to "remain vigilant". "Make no mistake, some of the rebel groups that took down Assad have their own grim record of terrorism," he said.

A senior US official quoted by Reuters, however, said that HTS was "saying the right things". "Six weeks left on the clock! The first official response from the White House underlines several key questions that will determine the shape of US policy on Syria going forward. But Biden - during his short time left in office - is unlikely to provide those answers, according to Aaron David Miller, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and a former Middle East analyst at the State Department.

"You're talking about an administration that has six weeks left on the clock," he said. "And with six weeks left on the clock, I would just try to prevent and guard against potential complications or catastrophes." That means most major decisions will likely be made by Trump. During his first term, Trump repeatedly sought to withdraw US troops from Syria. He appeared to re-up that effort, writing on his Truth Social account that the US "would have nothing to do" with the country.

The Biden administration has also not articulated how it will mediate its support for the SDF's fight against ISIL with the evolving landscape on the ground. Like other rebel groups, the SDF has seized new territory - including the eastern city of Deir Az Zor and the Abu Kamal border crossing with Iraq - in recent days. Speaking to reporters last week, Pentagon spokesman Pat Ryder said US forces were not "participating in combined arms manoeuvre with the SDF" in their offensive. But the fluid situation on the ground could see more opportunities for escalation between the SDF and the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) group, according to analyst Ildibi.

"Of course, those questions are still pending," he said. The Biden administration is also widely expected to revisit its designation of HTS as a "terrorist organisation", which could restrict US engagement with any fledgling transitional government. Jabhat al-Nusra was formed in 2012 by ISIL but broke from the group a year later and pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda. — Aljazeera

Turkiye urges inclusivity, fair treatment of minorities

DOHA: Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan has said the opposition takeover in Syria should not pose a threat to its neighbours as he stressed that help was needed to reconstruct the country. Speaking during a news conference at the Doha Forum, hours after opposition forces seized Damascus and declared an end to the rule of President Bashar al-Assad, Fidan said all minorities in Syria "should be treated equally".

"The principle of inclusiveness must never be compromised. There must never be a desire for revenge," he told reporters. "It is time to unite and reconstruct the country," he asserted. Moreover, Fidan called on the Syrian opposition to assure its neighbours the country would not pose a threat. "On the contrary, the new Syria will address the existing prob-

lems, will eliminate the threats," he said.

The Syrian war started as a largely unarmed uprising against al-Assad in March 2011, but morphed into a full-blown war that dragged in foreign powers, killed hundreds of thousands of people and turned millions into refugees. The fall of Damascus came after a lightning offensive that began late last month and saw opposition forces seize a number of strategic cities. Large crowds have gathered in the streets of Damascus and other parts of the country to celebrate the downfall of al-Assad, whose whereabouts remain unknown. Fidan called on all relevant parties in and outside Syria to act with "prudence and calm", while urging them to refrain from decisions that could further destabilise the region. Responding to a question on the whereabouts of al-Assad, Fidan

said he was unable to comment on the matter but added the Syrian leader was likely no longer in the country. He also criticised him for failing to "reconcile" with the people of Syria. "Since 2016, through the Astana process, we de-escalated the situation and basically froze the war. However, the regime did not use this opportunity to reconcile with its own people," he said.

Nevertheless, Fidan said Syria had reached a point where its people could "shape the future of their own country" and that millions of Syrians who fled due to the war could now return. "Today there is hope," he said, noting that the Syrian people could not achieve this alone. "The international community must support the Syrian people." Türkiye hosts some three million Syrian refugees, according to official figures. — Aljazeera

Qatar says 'momentum' building back up in Gaza ceasefire efforts

DOHA: A month after suspending its mediation bid, Qatar has said it sees "momentum" in efforts to reach a deal to end Israel's war on the Gaza Strip, as dozens of Palestinians were killed in the Israeli military's continued attacks on the besieged enclave.

Speaking at the Doha Forum, Qatari Foreign Minister and Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani said the country took a step back from mediating Gaza ceasefire talks because it failed to see "a real willingness" to end the war. But the minister said that after the United States presidential election on November 5, Qatar has sensed "that the momentum is coming back". "We have seen a lot of encouragement from the incoming administration [of US President-elect Donald Trump] in order to achieve a deal even before the president comes [into] office" in January, Al Thani said.

"And that actually made us [try] ... to put it back on track. We've been engaging in the past couple of weeks," he added. Efforts to

end Israel's war on Gaza, which has killed more than 44,600 Palestinians since early October 2023, have foundered, with critics accusing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of stymying the negotiations. The administration of outgoing US President Joe Biden, which has repeatedly said it is pushing for an end to the fighting in Gaza but refuses to condition US aid to Israel, also has faced criticism for failing to secure a ceasefire.

The US provides Israel with at least \$3.8bn in military aid annually, and the Biden administration has authorised \$14bn in further assistance to its ally since the war began last year. Trump - who, like Biden, is a staunch supporter of Israel - this week warned that "there will be hell to pay" if captives held in Gaza are not released by the time he enters the White House on January 20. "Those responsible will be hit harder than anybody has been hit in the long and storied History of the United States of America. Release the hostages now" he wrote on

social media.

Meanwhile, medical sources in Gaza told Al Jazeera Arabic that 39 Palestinians were killed since dawn in Israeli attacks across the bombed territory, including a strike in the Nuseirat refugee camp that killed at least 26 people. Reporting from Deir el-Balah in central Gaza, Al Jazeera's Tareq Abu Azzoum said the attack on the refugee camp targeted a building in a densely populated area housing displaced families.

"People have been buried under tonnes of debris," said Abu Azzoum, adding that rescuers and residents were still searching through the rubble for possible survivors as well as bodies that can be taken for burial. The Israeli military also has laid siege to Kamal Adwan Hospital in northern Gaza's Beit Lahiya, as well as the surrounding area. Footage verified by Al Jazeera's Sanad fact-checking agency showed Israeli forces firing on a Palestine Red Crescent Society ambulance near the hospital. — Aljazeera

Ghana's ex-President John Mahama wins election

GHANA: Ghana's former President John Dramani Mahama has won the country's presidential election after his main opponent, Vice President Mahamudu Bawumia, conceded defeat. "The people of Ghana have spoken, the people have voted for change at this time and we respect it with all humility," Bawumia said in a news conference.

The defeat in election ends two terms in power for the governing New Patriotic Party (NPP) under President Nana Akufo-Addo, marked by Ghana's worst economic crisis in years, involving high inflation and a debt default. Bawumia said he called Mahama, of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), to congratulate him. Earlier, NDC spokesman Sammy Gyamfi told reporters the party's internal review of results showed Mahama won 56.3 percent of the vote against 41.3 percent for Bawumia.

"It is very clear the people of this country have voted for change," Gyamfi said. The vice president said Mahama won the presidency "decisively". The NDC won the parliamentary election, according to the NPP's internal tally of votes. Mahama, who was president of Ghana between July 2012 and January 2017, confirmed on X he had received Bawumia's congratulatory call over his "emphatic victory". Blaring horns and cheering, the 65-year-old's supporters were already gathering and celebrating outside the party campaign headquarters in the capital, Accra. During his campaign, he promised to "reset" the country on various fronts and tried to appeal to young Ghanaians. His win marks a historic victory, making him the first president in the three decades of Ghana's Fourth Republic - since the 1992 return to multi-party democracy - to reclaim the presidency after being voted out. Ghana's economic woes dominated the election after the gold and cacao producer went through a crisis of default and currency devaluation, ending with a \$3bn International Monetary Fund bailout.

On corruption, Mahama vowed during the campaign that he will create a new office tasked with scrutinising government procurement above a \$5m threshold. He said unchecked procurement processes are a major source of corruption.

But Mahama also voiced support for the anti-LGBTQ bill passed by Ghana's parliament in February but which is yet to be signed into law and has sparked international criticism. Ghana's election commission had said official results were likely due. With a history of democratic stability, Ghana's two main parties, the NPP and NDC, have alternated in power equally since the return to multi-party politics in 1992. — Aljazeera

Migrants arrive back in Somalia

MOGADISHU (AP): Nearly 50 survivors of a migrant boat tragedy last month that left 25 people dead in the Indian Ocean off Madagascar arrived back in Somalia and were received by government officials.

The survivors aged 17 to 50 wore outfits made of fabric with the Somali national flag colors as they disembarked from a plane in the capital, Mogadishu, visibly relieved to return to safety. Many young Somalis embark every year on dangerous journeys in search of better opportunities abroad. The U.N. agency has previously raised concerns over the rise in irregular migration from Horn of Africa countries as people flee from conflict and drought.

The survivors told The Associated Press that they were stranded in the ocean for 13 days after their boat's engines failed. Ahmed Hussein, who was traveling with his now-deceased cousin, said they were heading to Europe hoping for a better life. Two vessels carrying the migrants departed Somalia early last month. "We were split into two small boats.



BERLIN: A man waving Syrian flag as people gather on the streets in Germany.

Romania's candidate denounces canceled vote at polling station

BUCHAREST (AP): Romania's defiant far-right presidential candidate, Calin Georgescu, stood outside a closed polling station to denounce a top court's unprecedented decision to annul the first round of the vote in which he emerged as the frontrunner.

The Constitutional Court canceled the election after a trove of declassified intelligence alleged Russia organized a sprawling campaign across social media to promote Georgescu. "Today is Constitution Day and there is nothing constitutional in Romania anymore. I am here in the name of democracy," Georgescu, 62, told media in Mogosoaia, outside Bucharest. "By canceling democracy, our very freedom is canceled."

The court cited the illegal use of digital technologies including artificial intelligence, as well as undeclared sources of funding. Without naming Georgescu, the court said one candidate received "preferential treatment" on social media platforms, distorting voters' expressed will. Despite being a huge outsider who declared zero campaign spending, Georgescu topped the polls in the first round on Nov. 24, and was due to face reformist Elena Lasconi of the Save Romania Union party in a runoff. Thirteen candidates ran in the first round of the presidential race in the European Union and NATO member country, the aftermath of which was gripped by myriad controversies

including a recount of the vote ordered by the same court.

New dates will be set to rerun the presidential vote from scratch. Romanian President Klaus Iohannis said in a statement marking Constitution Day that "we find ourselves in a moment of profound responsibility toward the values that characterize us as a nation." "The Romanian Constitution defines the framework within which the state and political life operate, serving as a shield against threats to democracy," he said. "In turbulent times, state institutions are called upon to act with calm, wisdom and respect for the law, the Constitution and democracy." George Simion, the 38-year-old leader of the far-right Alliance for the Unity of Romanians, told reporters outside a closed polling station in Bucharest that the annulment amounted to an attack against democracy, saying Iohannis should "take a step back and reject the Constitution, not mock it."

"It is Constitution Day. It is a day of significance for Romanians. It is a day when Romanians should have gone to vote freely," he said, adding that "blood was shed for this 35 years ago," referring to Romania's revolution in December 1989 that overthrew communism. After Georgescu unexpectedly topped the polls in the first round, his success left many political observers wondering how most local surveys had placed him

behind at least five other candidates before the vote. Many observers attributed his success to his TikTok account, which now has 6.2 million likes and 565,000 followers. But some experts suspected Georgescu's online following was artificially inflated, while Romania's top security body alleged he was given preferential treatment by TikTok over other candidates. Romanian prosecutors conducted raids at three properties in the central city of Brasov linked to Bogdan Peschir, who is suspected of illegally financing a campaign to promote Georgescu. The raids were based on suspicions of voter corruption, money laundering and cyber fraud, prosecutors said.

The secret services alleged that Peschir paid \$381,000 (361,000 euros) to TikTok users to promote Georgescu content on the Chinese-owned platform. Intelligence authorities said information they obtained "revealed an aggressive promotion campaign" to increase and accelerate Georgescu's popularity. There is no clear link between Peschir and alleged Russian interference. Russia denies meddling in Romania. Georgescu's would-be opponent Lasconi also strongly condemned the court's decision to annul the elections, saying it was "illegal, immoral, and crushes the very essence of democracy" and that the second round should have gone forward.

How a uranium mine became a pawn in the row between Niger and France

PARIS (BBC): In the latest sign of a dramatic deterioration in relations, Niger's military rulers appear increasingly determined to drive France out of any significant sector in their economy - and particularly uranium mining. This week the French state nuclear company Orano announced that the junta - which deposed France's ally, President Mohamed Bazoum, in a coup in July 2023 - had taken operational control of its local mining firm, Somair.

The company's efforts to resume exports have for months been blocked by the regime and it is being pushed into financial crisis. And the impact could be felt more widely - although Niger accounts for less than 5% of the uranium produced globally, in 2022 it accounted for a quarter of the supply to nuclear power plants across Europe.

So the timing could hardly be more awkward, as Western countries struggle to meet the challenge of climate change and cut their carbon emissions from electricity generation. For French President Emmanuel Macron, already wrestling with political cri-

sis at home, the potential departure of Orano from Niger is certainly awkward in image terms.

For it coincides with bruising news from other long-standing African partners - Chad has suddenly announced the ending of a defence agreement with Paris, while Senegal has confirmed its insistence on the eventual closure of the French military base in Dakar. But in any case, the crisis facing Orano in Niger represents a significant practical challenge for French energy supply. With 18 nuclear plants, totalling 56 reactors, which generate almost 65% of its electricity, France has been ahead of the game in containing carbon emissions from the power sector.

But the country's own limited production of uranium ended more than 20 years ago. So, over the past decade or so, it has imported almost 90,000 tonnes - a fifth of which has come from Niger. Only Kazakhstan - which accounts for 45% of global output - was a more important source of supply. The continuing paralysis, or the definitive shutdown, of Orano's operations in Niger

would certainly force France to look elsewhere.

This should be achievable, as alternative supplies can be obtained from countries including Uzbekistan, Australia and Namibia. Last year, as West African neighbours responded to the coup in Niger by imposing a trade blockade that paralysed uranium exports, other suppliers readily stepped into the breach. The European Union's imports of the mineral from the country plunged by a third, but these were largely replaced by Canada. But there was also a politically awkward price to pay. EU imports of uranium from Russia rose by more than 70%, despite the heavy sanctions imposed on Moscow because of its invasion of Ukraine.

And of course, it is Russia which has become the new best friend of the military leaders who have seized power in Niger and its allied neighbours, Burkina Faso and Mali, since 2020. Russian military contractors fight alongside the Malian army in its campaign against jihadists and ethnic Tuareg separatists, while they also help to protect the senior leader-

ship of the juntas in Niger and Burkina Faso. So although France, and Europe more generally, would be able to find ways to cope with a definitive loss of Niger's uranium supply, the shift would not be entirely comfortable. In the short-term at least, EU states would probably become more reliant on Russia and its central Asian neighbours, thus undermining their own effort to maintain economic pressure on President Vladimir Putin during a potentially crucial period in the Ukraine crisis.

Moreover, Niger's regime, whose attitude towards the EU as a whole has become almost as mistrustful as its broken relationship with France, continues to seek alternatives to its old Western partnerships. And Iran - a potential customer, of course, for uranium - has emerged as an option. Contacts between the two governments have deepened, with Niger's Prime Minister Ali Mahamane Lamine Zeine visiting Tehran in January. Rumours of a possible deal for the supply of uranium "yellowcake" (concentrate) briefly circulated a few months ago.

Biden administration unveils new \$988m US military aid package for Ukraine

WASHINGTON: Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin has announced that the United States will provide nearly \$1bn in additional military aid to war-torn Ukraine, as it attempts to fend off an ongoing Russian invasion.

In unveiling the aid package, Austin offered some pointed remarks aimed at the incoming administration of US President-elect Donald Trump. "The baton will soon be passed," Austin said. "Others will decide the course ahead. And I hope that they will build on the strength that we have forged over the past four years."

The package, valued at \$988m, comes on the heels of a separate \$725m in military assistance announced on December 2. The latest announcement includes

drones and munitions for the High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS) that the US has previously provided. In total, the US has given \$62bn in military aid to Ukraine since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of the country in February 2022. But the latest rush of funds and supplies to Ukraine arrives in the waning days of President Joe Biden's administration. His term is set to end on January 20, when Trump takes office.

Under Trump, it is unclear whether the US will continue its support for Ukraine. Trump has threatened to pull funding from Ukraine's fight and other military alliances, including NATO. Speaking at a meeting of national security officials at the Ronald Reagan

Presidential Library in California, Austin briefly addressed the uncertainty ahead. "This administration has made its choice. So has a bipartisan coalition in Congress. The next administration must make its own choice," Austin said. He added that Reagan, a Republican icon, "would have stood on the side of Ukraine, American security and human freedom".

The Biden administration has largely been using "presidential drawdown authority" to withdraw excess defence materials from US stockpiles and transfer them to Ukraine, without congressional approval. Approximately \$6bn remains in the president's hands under his drawdown authority. But \$988m package comes instead from

the \$2.21bn remaining in the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (USAI), which allows for the purchase of weapons and military supplies. The USAI is designed to supply Ukraine with longer-term weapons systems to bolster its military capabilities.

Trump, meanwhile, participated in a brief, closed-door meeting with his Ukrainian counterpart, Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Both were in Paris, France, to celebrate the reopening of the Notre Dame cathedral. When Trump campaigned for re-election earlier this year in Savannah, Georgia, Trump criticised Zelenskyy as the "greatest salesman on Earth" for extracting military aid from the US. — Aljazeera

The Frontier Post

Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

Printed and published by Mahmood Afridi at Moraka's Printers, 27 Abdara Road, University Town, Peshawar.

Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001

Peshawar Fax: 091-5703687, Post Box No. 573

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

USA and Canada Toll Free Number 1-800-5905747

Situation in Syria will have spillover effects

TAKING advantage of the ongoing conflict in Gaza and Lebanon, Syria's rebel groups, a coalition with a complicated composition and backed by foreign forces including the United States and Türkiye, launched a surprise offensive against Syria's pro-government forces last month.

In a stunning development on Sunday, these opposition forces claimed to have taken Damascus, the country's capital, and announced an end to President Bashar al-Assad's government. This has sent shock waves around the world as it spells more uncertainties for an already crisis-ridden region.

It also means even more suffering for the Syrian people.

In a statement on Sunday, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said that it hopes Syria will regain stability as soon as possible, and called on all relevant parties to take measures to ensure the safety of Chinese institutions and personnel in the country.

The lightning advance of the Syrian rebel forces has plunged the Middle East country into further violence, chaos and now an alleged regime change, dealing yet another heavy blow to the fragile fabric of the country and the broader region's peace and stability.

Before the alleged fall of Damascus, the rebels had already captured several other big Syrian cities including Aleppo and Hama. The abrupt escalation of tensions in Syria has thrown the country into a fresh spiral of violence that has brought even more grief and an ever-worsening humanitarian disaster to the Syrian people.

The United Nations has warned that the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate, with more than 370,000 Syrians being displaced and many others trapped in front-line areas. UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Syria Adam Abdelmoula said in a statement on Sunday that the latest violence has "resulted in the tragic loss of innocent civilian lives, including women and children, damage to civilian infrastructure, and the suspension of critical services".

Syria was already suffering a humanitarian crisis resulting from the civil war in the country that is now in its 14th year, with around 90 percent of families in Syria living in poverty. After years of civil war and unrest and the heavy toll of US sanctions against Syria, Syrian people have already suffered greatly.

Before the recent influx of more than half a million returnees and refugees from Lebanon, there were more than 16.7 million people in Syria in need of humanitarian assistance. The dire humanitarian situation needs more than expressions of sympathy.

Influential players in Syria's civil war, especially those with sway over the rebel coalition, should look to the larger humanitarian picture and the need for stability in the region, rather than relentlessly exploiting the sufferings of Syrian people in selfish pursuit of their own strategic interests.

What is happening in Syria is yet another consequence of the Israel-Hamas conflict which began more than a year ago. With Washington's backing and encouragement, Tel Aviv has struck against one force after another in the Middle East, with its military launching attacks near and far against Hamas, Hezbollah and even targets in Syria. Israel's reckless war machine has broken the region's power balance and given Syria's rebels the opportunity they were looking for.

The new wave of violence in Syria, the first significant one since 2016, has plunged the country deeper into crisis and aggravated its people's plight. It has also opened a new chaotic front in the Middle East that has just seen a glimmer of hope for peace with the newly-reached Lebanon truce.

Any humanitarian violation must be condemned, and so must any foreign interference aimed at instigating regime change in the country. Relevant UN resolutions on Syria must be upheld and the international community should support a peaceful and proper resolution of the crisis in Syria through inclusive political dialogue at an early date.

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Genuine solidarity with Palestinians is not conditional

Dr. Ramzy Baroud

A new kind of unity around Palestine is finally finding its way to the solidarity movement worldwide. The reason behind this unity is obvious: Gaza.

The world's first livestreamed genocide and the growing spontaneous compassion, thus solidarity, with the Palestinian victims have helped recenter priorities from the typical political and ideological conflicts back to where they should have always remained: the plight of the Palestinian people.

In other words, it is the sheer criminality of Israel, the steadfastness, resilience and dignity of the Palestinians, and the genuine love of Palestine by ordinary people that have imposed themselves on the rest of the world.

While many solidarity groups, despite their differences, always found margins for unity around Palestine, many did not. Instead of rallying in support of a Palestinian justice-based discourse, mainly focused on ending the Israeli occupation, dismantling apartheid and obtaining full Palestinian rights, many groups rallied around their own ideological, political and often personal priorities. This led to deep divisions and, ultimately, the unfortunate splintering of what was meant to be a single global movement.

Though many rightly claim that the movement suffered dire consequences as a result of the Syrian war and other conflicts linked to the so-called Arab Spring, in truth, it was historically prone to divisions long before the recent upheavals

in the Middle East.

The collapse of the Soviet Union left permanent scars on all progressive movements across the world. In the words of Domenico Losurdo,

"Western Marxists" retreated to their academic hubs and "Eastern Marxists" were left to fight the scourges of the US-led "new world order" alone.

The Balkanization of the socialist movement globally, but mainly in Western countries, can still be seen in the views of many socialist groups regarding the events underway in Palestine and of their proscribed "solutions" to the Israeli occupation.

Whether these so-called solutions are pertinent or not, they are of very little value to the struggle of the Palestinians on the ground. After all, these magic formulas are often developed in Western academic laboratories, with little or no connection to the events underway in Jenin, Khan Yunis or Jabaliya.

Additionally, there is the problem of transnational solidarity. This type of solidarity is simply conditioned on the expected return of an equal amount of solidarity in the form of political reciprocity. This notion is a misinformed application of the concept of intersectionality, as in various disaffected groups offering mutual solidarity to amplify their collective voice and advance their interests.

While intersectionality at a global level is hardly functional, let alone tested — interstate relations are usually governed by politi-

cal strategy, national interests and geopolitical formations — intersectionality within a national and local framework is very much possible. For the latter to carry meaning, however, it requires an organic understanding of the struggles of each group, a degree of social immersion and genuine love and compassion for one another.

In the case of Palestine, however, this noble idea is often conflated with negotiable and transactional solidarity, which might work at the political stage, especially during times of elections, but rarely helps cement long-term bonds between oppressed communities.

The ongoing Israeli genocide in Gaza has certainly helped many groups expand the margins of unity so that they may work together to bring the extermination of Gaza to an end and to hold Israeli war criminals accountable in any way possible. This positive sentiment, however, must continue long after the end of the genocide, until the Palestinian people are finally free from the yoke of Israeli settler colonialism.

The point here is that we already have numerous reasons to find and maintain unity around Palestine, without laboring to find ideological, political or any other kind of common ground.

The Israeli settler-colonial project is just a manifestation of Western colonialism and imperialism in their classical definitions. The genocide in Gaza is no

different to the genocide of the Herero and Nama people of Namibia at the turn of the 20th century and US-Western interventionism in Palestine is no different to the destructive role played by Western countries in Vietnam and numerous other contested spaces all over the world.

Placing the Israeli occupation of Palestine in a colonial framework has helped many liberate themselves from confused notions about Israel's "inherent" rights over the Palestinians. Indeed, there can be no justification for the existence of Israel as an exclusively "Jewish state" in a land that belonged to the native Palestinian people.

By the same token, the much-touted Israeli "right to self-defense" — a notion that even some "progressives" continue to parrot — does not apply to military occupiers in an active state of aggression or those carrying out genocide.

Keeping the focus on Palestinian priorities also has other benefits, including that of moral clarity. Those who do not find the rights of the Palestinian people compelling enough to develop a united front were never intended to be part of the movement in the first place, thus their "solidarity" is superficial.

The road to Palestinian liberation can only go through Palestine itself and, more specifically, the clarity of purpose of the Palestinian people who, more than any other nation in modern times, have paid and continue to pay the highest price for their freedom.

Netanyahu, who would have a say in deciding Assad's fate. Netanyahu destroyed Gaza and then shifted to the timing of the American elections to take out the Hezbollah leadership.

Balances were upended. In Idlib, Assad's opponents were waiting for the right opportunity to pounce. They never believed in the "de-escalation" agreement and "Trump time." Erdogan chose to punish Assad, who repeatedly refused offers to hold a meeting. He punished Assad and Syria's Kurds as well.

Ahmed Al-Sharaa, known as Abu Mohammed Al-Golani, lit the spark. The still waters became a flood that swept Aleppo, Hama, Homs and Damascus. Soleimani and Nasrallah were no longer there to help Assad. The supreme leader did not have an answer and Putin was mired in the bloodbath in Ukraine. Fates were decided in Damascus during that long night. It changed the fate of Syria and its regional position. It changed the regional scene. It severed the route of exporting the revolution and the smuggling of rockets from Tehran to Beirut. Hezbollah was brought down to size from its regional role to returning to UN Security Council Resolution 1701. One night in Damascus changed balances in Lebanon. The scene was different yesterday. Syria is without Assad and without Hezbollah. Assad got on that plane and left. An entire era is over. The president left Syria and the region is left to grapple with the "day after" and its challenges.

No surprise Americans are 'rooting for' the UnitedHealthcare CEO's killer

Belén Fernández

ON the morning of December 4, Brian Thompson, the CEO of UnitedHealthcare — the largest health insurer in the United States — was fatally shot in New York City. The suspect has yet to be apprehended and a motive has not been established, although the words "depose", "deny", and "delay" were found written in permanent marker on bullet casings at the crime scene — a potential allusion to manoeuvres by health insurance companies to avoid paying for the things they are supposed to pay for.

In the social media world, the tears for Thompson were few and far between, with Fox News lamenting on December 7 that a commemorative Facebook post by UnitedHealth Group — the parent company of UnitedHealthcare — had already racked up more than 77,000 laughing emoji reactions. Other social media users scattered witty counter-condolences across various online platforms, such as "My empathy is out of network" and "I'm sorry, prior authorization is required for thoughts and prayers" — a reference to another common tactic employed by UnitedHealthcare and similar firms to decline coverage and increase profit margins.

Meanwhile, The New York Times notes that, while authorities are pleading for help from the public in tracking down the suspected perpetrator, "some seem more interested in rooting for the gunman," who is being "venerated as something approaching a folk hero".

And yet it's not difficult to understand why many Americans would fail to mourn the death of a man who symbolised a willfully dysfunctional, for-profit US healthcare system that is literally deadly in itself.

Indeed, there's no denying this claim: that it's downright sick that people who are seeking medical treatment precisely because they are ill should be put through such mental and physical agony simply to obtain care.

Public anger at the system is, therefore, absolutely logical — you might even call it a preexisting condition. Of all the predatory firms that comprise the multitrillion-dollar US healthcare industry, UnitedHealthcare has a particularly vampiric reputation for charging huge premiums while pathologically denying claims left and right. As per The Associated Press news agency,

UnitedHealthcare raked in \$281bn in 2023, while Thompson himself enjoyed a \$10.2m annual pay package. This financial context is key when considering, for example, the recent case of a chronically ill college student in the US who was reportedly slammed with \$800,000 in medical bills when

UnitedHealthcare denied him coverage for the drugs his doctors had prescribed. Or consider the untold number of folks whose claims denials have ultimately constituted death sentences — and all to sustain those billions in revenue and Thompson's annual pay package.

Back in 2009, a Harvard Medical School study found that 45,000 Americans were dying every year for lack of health insurance. This, of course, does not include the countless insured Americans who die every year because their insurance companies opt to deny them life-saving treatment.

But that, after all, is how capitalism works: healthcare is a business, not a right, and human lives are expendable in the interest of ensuring that obscene wealth remains concentrated in the hands of an elite minority. Americans spend far more money per capita on healthcare than their counterparts in other developed nations — but it's not like you get what you pay for. Often, the US healthcare experience consists of jumping through hellish bureaucratic hoops, spending a good portion of your life on hold on the telephone, and battling insurance claims denials — if you have the energy and time to do so.

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I personally have no health insurance policy, which is part of the reason I avoid the US like the plague despite it being my birthplace. I do, however, have some personal experience with UnitedHealthcare, which was my father's insurer at the time of his death last year of prostate cancer in Washington, DC.

My dad was enrolled in the government-funded Medicare Advantage programme for seniors, which allows private firms like UnitedHealthcare to overbill the government for its services while skimping on providing needed care to the country's elderly. Denied insurance coverage for the prostate cancer drug Xtandi — which, to add insult to injury, was developed with US taxpayer money — my father was forced to seek foundational financial support in order to acquire the medication. Had he not succeeded, he would have been billed no less than \$14,579.01 for a

one-month supply, ie, more than the average annual income in some countries.

Obviously, Brian Thompson is not personally responsible for the terminally ill state of society in the US — a country that managed to spend \$916bn on its military in 2023 alone and that continues to fund Israel's genocide in the Gaza Strip to the tune of tens of billions of dollars, all while poverty remains a leading cause of death among Americans.

But the man was in fact emblematic of the lethal inequality that underpins US corporatocracy, where the health insurance racket does its part to keep people so sick and debt-ridden that they can't pose a challenge to the system. And that, at the end of the day, is why the gunman is being "venerated as something approaching a folk hero".

The New York Times quotes Alex Goldenberg, a senior adviser at a research institute that tracks online threats, on the perceived "lionization of the shooter" and the implications of Thompson's killing: "It's being framed as some opening blow in a broader class war, which is very concerning as it heightens the threat environment for similar actors to engage in similar acts of violence."

But there is already a class war raging in the US, and the healthcare system is one of its most violent fronts.

Ibn Khaldun's asabiyya and Bashar's rapid downfall

And unlike Assad,

Zelenskyy was in France to meet with French President Emmanuel Macron and US President-elect Donald Trump ahead of the reopening ceremony at Notre Dame Cathedral, where the Ukrainian leader received a standing ovation.

As rebel fighters closed in on Damascus, Trump himself nodded to the Kremlin's narrowing range of options in a post on social media. "Russia, because they are so tied up in Ukraine, and with the loss there of over 600,000 soldiers, seems incapable of stopping this literal march through Syria, a country they

In a visit to Hmeimim in 2017, Putin pledged that the two bases would “continue to operation on a permanent basis,” warning that if “the terrorists” – i.e., the opponents of Assad – “raise their heads again, we will deal unprecedented strikes unlike anything they have seen.”

The ouster of Assad may only harden his position.

— CNN

While effective in addressing infrastructure

market have led to a significant reduction in demand. At its 2021 peak, the real estate market saw 1.8 billion square meters of property being sold for 18.2 trillion yuan (\$2.51 trillion). But in 2023, property sales plummeted to 1.12 billion square meters for 11.6 trillion yuan. And in the first 10 months of this year, property sales declined by 20.9 percent — at this pace of decline, annual sales are projected to shrink further to just 9.2 trillion yuan. This decline has created a wide gap in demand that emerging industries such as electric vehicles and renewable energy, local governments' activities, including investment and purchase activity. Addressing these balance sheet challenges depends on broader economic recovery and asset price stabilization, both of which require time.

To ensure sustained recovery, China must combine immediate policy measures with deeper structural reforms.

To begin, it needs to strengthen countercyclical measures. In fact, the government has implemented policies to help boost economic recovery, including cutting reserve requirement ratios and interest rates. Additionally, the recent

boosting consumption. Currently, commodity consumption is relatively saturated, so efforts should be made to actively expand service consumption. Initiatives such as birth subsidies and extending public services to migrant populations can stimulate household spending. Expanding access to high-end healthcare, tourism and eldercare services can also cater to diverse consumer needs.

To promote the stabilization and recovery of the real estate market, on the supply side, stricter control over new construction, optimizing existing stock and

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To promote the stabilization and recovery of the real estate market, on the supply side, stricter control over new construction, optimizing existing stock and

— *China Daily*

In 1400, his forces sacked Aleppo and then

However, these weapons were never used in a conventional war against the Israeli military. This enormous military

As Ibn Khaldun observed some 700 years ago, corruption can kill asabiyya and bring the hasty downfall of whole dynasties. Clearly the al-Assad had not learned much from the history of their own country.



PSX stays bullish, gains 916 more points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bullish trend on Monday, gaining 916.44 more points, a positive change of 0.84 percent, closing at 109,970.39 points as compared to 109,053.95 points on the last trading day.

A total of 1,597,868,204 shares were traded during the day as compared to 1,697,842,022 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 60.251 billion against Rs.57.487 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 467 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 278 of them recorded gains and 158 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 31 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were K-Electric

with 164,514,973 shares at Rs 6.16 per share, WorldCall Telecom with 161,906,262 shares at Rs 1.83 per share and Cnergyico PK with 113,022,299 shares at Rs.7.13 per share.

Nestle Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.671.59 per share price, closing at Rs.7,387.52, whereas the runner-up was Sazgar Engineering Works Limited with Rs 95.01 rise in its per share price to Rs 1,156.40.

Lucky Core Industries Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 47.84 per share closing at Rs 1,094.88 followed by Thai Limited with Rs 21.39 decline to close at Rs.442.39.

Rupee gains 03 pasia against dollar

Pakistani rupee on Monday appreciated by 03

paisa against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs277.97 against the previous day's closing of Rs278.00.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs277.50 and Rs279.00 respectively.

The price of Euro decreased by 54 paisa to close at Rs293.66 against the last day's closing of Rs294.20, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs1.84, whereas a decrease of one paisa was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs354.82 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs354.83.

The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham remained stagnant and closed at

Rs75.68 while the Saudi Riyal decreased by 01 paisa to close at Rs73.99.

Gold prices increase by Rs2000 per tola

The price of 24 karat per tola gold witnessed an increase of Rs.2000 and was sold at Rs. Rs 276,400 on Monday against its sale at Rs 274,400 on previous trading day. All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs. 1,734 to Rs.236,698 from Rs 235,254 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat also went up to Rs.217,221 from Rs 215,650.

Per tola and ten gram silver were also traded at same rate at Rs 3,400 and Rs 2,914.95, respectively.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$20 to \$2,652 from \$2,632, the Association reported.



PESHAWAR: President Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Fazal Moqeen Khan and Head of Strategic Programs and Operations Green Star General Hospital Dr Sanam Gul signing a MOU.

Workers' remittances increased

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The workers' remittances increased by 33.6 percent during the first five months of the current fiscal year as compared to the corresponding period of last year, according to latest data of State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) released on Monday.

The remittances reached to US\$ 14.8 billion during July-November 2024-25 as against the remittances of US\$ 11.1 billion received during July-November 2023-24.

On year-on-year basis, workers' remittances during November 2024 recorded an inflow of US\$ 2.9 billion, posting an increase of 29.1 percent as compared to same month of last year.

Remittances inflows during November, 2024 were mainly sourced from Saudi Arabia (\$729.2 million), United Arab Emirates (\$619.4 million), United Kingdom (\$409.9 million) and United States of America (\$288.2 million).

SBP cancels license

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) on December 09, 2024 has cancelled the authorization/license issued to M/s Al-Hameed International Money Exchange (Private) Limited under the Foreign Exchange Regulations Act, 1947 on account of contraventions of the applicable laws and SBP's regulations. Therefore, the aforesaid exchange company, including its head office and outlets can no longer undertake any kind of foreign exchange related business activity.

SECP approved plan

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has approved a Strategic Action Plan 2024-2026 to facilitate the growth and development of Islamic finance in non-bank financial sectors.

The plan was prepared by the SECP's apex committee chaired by Mujtaba Ahmed Lodhi, Commissioner-SCD, established in 2023 with representation from PSX, Central Depository Company, National Clearing Company of Pakistan Limited, SECP policy department heads, and industry experts.

Provide healthcare facilities to business:

SCCI and GGH sign MoU

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A memorandum of understanding was signed between Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Greenstar General Hospital Peshawar for provision of best healthcare facilities at subsidized rates to the business community.

The MoU aims to provide better healthcare facilities to members, staff and industrial workers at subsidized rates.

SCCI president Fazal Moqeen Khan and Head of Strategic Programs and Operations, GGH Peshawar Dr Sanam Gul signed the agreement during a ceremony held here at the chamber house on Monday.

GGH Peshawar Assistant

Manager Muhammad Sarhad, Secretary General of the chamber Muqtasid Ahsan, officials of the private hospital and others were present on the occasion.

Fazal Moqeen while speaking on the occasion termed the agreement a milestone and important step toward provision of best healthcare facilities at subsidized rates.

He said SCCI is taking proactive steps for provision of better facilities and services to its members and signing of MoU is a part of this effort.

According to the agreement, Moqeen said members will avail 50 percent discount on various health services by GGH Peshawar.

He furthermore said the

SCCI will provide support in arranging medical camps with GGH Peshawar.

He added that the chamber is collaborating with various government and private institutions and organizations for the provision of best facilities to its members.

Moqeen vowed no stone will remain unturned to provide best facilities in multiple sectors and resolution of issues of the business community.

He promised they will provide facilities to members at their doorstep.

Earlier, officials from GGH Peshawar apprised the meeting about salient features of the memorandum of understanding and joint collaboration and initiatives in future.

Appointment of diplomats:

LCCI demand for chambers' role

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry has urged the government to ensure the chambers' role in the appointment process of diplomats, especially trade officers abroad. This involvement is crucial to achieve quicker and more effective economic results.

In response to a recent media report here Monday, LCCI President Mian Abuzar Shad stressed the importance of merit-based appointments for key diplomatic positions. He said that competent individuals must be appointed to these critical roles to effectively represent Pakistan's interests globally and to stimulate trade.

Mian Abuzar Shad urged the government to consult with the chambers of commerce during the appointment process to ensure that only qualified and capable individuals are chosen. Additionally, he recommended that formal examinations be made mandatory for these appointments, with 10 additional marks allocated for interviews conducted in collaboration with chambers of commerce and industry.

The LCCI President said that the business community contributes over Rs. 13 trillion in taxes annually and has a legitimate right to be part of consultations on matters that directly impact the nation's economic

future. He attributed Pakistan's stagnant trade performance over the past 77 years to the lack of qualified individuals in critical overseas positions. These positions often filled by individuals who were unable to effectively promote Pakistan's trade or present the nation's case on international platforms, have contributed significantly to the country's underperformance in global markets.

Mian Abuzar Shad presented several actionable suggestions to the government to address these challenges and improve the effectiveness of Pakistan's trade diplomacy. He said that the government should conduct a comprehensive review of the performance of all trade officers for the past three months and share these reports with chambers of commerce for evaluation. This transparency will allow the business community to assess whether the officers are effectively promoting trade.

He said that each trade officer should be tasked with achieving a minimum of 2.5 percent trade growth every quarter. This performance-based approach will ensure that officers are held accountable for tangible results. In the case of underperformance, trade officers should be given two opportunities to improve their performance.

Lost & Found

I have lost original file of 5 Marla Plot Reg. # BWC33V67135 situated at Blue World city. If anyone finds please return it to. Akbar Wali Khan S/o Farman Wali Khan Zargarinda Chitral, CNIC # 15202-0809593-7 Contact: 0343-9059719

Lost & Found

I have lost Dora Hadis Sanad of Jamia Haqqani Akora Madrassa somewhere in Peshawar area. If anyone finds please return it to address Madarassa Muhammadia Jamia Kosar Qazi Town # 2 Gul Abad Peshawar. 0333-9933462 / 0348-6585698

Court Notice

In the court of sana shah civil judge IV. Ilaqia Qazi district Swat. Case #.176/1 institution 02/10/2024. Next Hearing date 04/01/2025. Arsalan Khan etc. VS Muhammad Asif Khan etc. Notice to:- 2) Muhammad Rehman son. 3) Mst. Shahi Begum daughter Muqam. 5) liqat ali s/o Bahramand Akhonzada Bamboola district Dir.14) Raza Khan s/o umara Khan r/o panjagram tehsil babozai District swat. Presently (Abroad) Whereas the above named cannot be served in ordinary manner it is therefore proclaimed or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court on 04/01/2025. at 8:30 am. Ex-parte proceeding will be initiated against you.

Fly Jinnah expands connectivity to three key cities in Saudi Arabia

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Fly Jinnah, Pakistan's low-cost carrier, announces the increase in flight frequencies to three key destinations in Saudi Arabia including Dammam, Riyadh and Jeddah, directly from Lahore started.

The increase in frequencies reflect Fly Jinnah's commitment to enhancing connectivity and convenience for travelers between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. As the flights to Dammam will increase from two to three weekly flights, Jeddah flights will now operate daily, up from four weekly services and Riyadh flights will rise from two to



three services.

Fly Jinnah's spokesperson commented, "The increase in flight frequencies from Lahore to Dammam, Riyadh, and Jeddah marks a significant step towards strengthening the connectivity between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. By offering more seamless travel

options, we strive to serve our growing customer base while fostering deeper ties between the two nations."

With a modern fleet of five Airbus A320 aircraft, Fly Jinnah serves five major cities in Pakistan: Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Peshawar, and Quetta. The airline is dedi-

cated to delivering exceptional service and value-driven travel experiences while expanding its network to meet growing passenger demand.

Fly Jinnah passengers enjoy extra comfort, provided by the most generous seat pitch in any economy cabin. The airline offers value-added services such as the SkyCafe onboard menu, featuring a wide variety of snacks, sandwiches, and meals at affordable prices. Additionally, passengers can access SkyTime, a complimentary in-flight streaming service offering an extensive selection of entertainment directly to personal devices.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Five ships, MSC Positano, Apollon-D, Searay, Hafnia Lene and Apollo GR carrying Container, Palm oil, Gasoline and Coal,berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal, Liquid Cargo Terminal, FOTCO oil Terminal and Pakistan International Bulk Terminal respectively on Sunday.

Meanwhile another ship 'Diamond' scheduled to load/offload Rice also arrived at outer anchorage on same day.

Eleven ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them a containership 'MSC Positano' left the on today morning, while four more ships, Apollon-D, Manticore, Ashiko Victoria and Borno are expected to sail on today.

Cargo volume of 119,730 tonnes, comprising 75,945 tonnes imports cargo and 43,785 tonnes export cargo carried in 4,488 Containers (1,983 TEUs Imports & 2,505 TEUs Export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

Eleven ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them two ships, Diamond and DS Sofie Bulker & another containership 'MSC Silvia' scheduled to load/offload Rice and Container are expected to take berths at FAP, MW-2 and QICT respectively on today Monday 9th December, while another containership 'Maersk Seletar' due to arrive at port on Tuesday.

Committee formed for beautification: FCCI

FAISALABAD (APP): The Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) will make concerted efforts in collaboration with departments concerned for the beautification of Faisalabad and in this connection an eight-member committee has been constituted, said FCCI President Rehan Naseem Bharara.

Addressing the concluding session of a joint meeting of the FCCI Standing Committees on liaison with Traffic Police and Municipal Corporation, he said that this 8-member committee will consist of Qaisar Shams Gucha, Senior Vice President FCCI, in addition to three members from traders and two each from traffic police and Faisalabad Municipal Corporation.

He said that Faisalabad is a well-planned city of Pakistan but encroachments and traffic jams have tarnished its beauty and mobility. He said that FCCI members are very cooperative but government departments must take them into confidence before taking any harsh steps.

He said that the municipal corporation must regulate the squatters, vendors and cart owners to ensure smooth flow of traffic on city roads. He said that as VP a few years ago, he had got approval of the canal road and service road from the then Chief Minister Shehbaz Sharif. "Thousands of people are

now daily using these roads", he said and added that these roads are also facing traffic blocks due to mismanagement and ignorance of road users.

He said that the closure of unplanned bridges on the canal played a key role in ensuring uninterrupted traffic flow on it but now these bridges have been again opened which were becoming problematic for vehicular traffic.

He appreciated the joint eight members committee and hoped that it would try to resolve the most ticklish problems of encroachments and traffic jams.

Syed Ali Abbas Bukhari, Chief Officer Municipal Corporation Faisalabad (MCF), said that he had visited the iconic clock tower immediately after assuming his office. He lamented that it was littered with dust and rubbish. He cleaned it on a priority basis and its fountains were also made operational.

"Lights are also being installed which could give a beautiful look while entering into any bazaar", he said and added that a sound system would also be installed for making public announcements.

He said that the fountains in Gumti outside the Rail bazaar would also be restored while special steps would be taken for the beautification of the historic Qaisary gate. He thanked the business community who has acknowl-

edged the efforts of Municipal Officer Regulation Madam Azmat Firdous for the removal of encroachments.

He said that apart from the downtown area, a model bazaar has been planned on a nine canal area on Satiana road. "It would have carts of the same design and colour", he said and added that similar arrangements would also be made along other roads without creating traffic hurdles. About the Canal Road, he said that its crossings are being painted which would beautify this main road artery.

CTO Farhan Aslam appreciated the efforts of the FCCI to resolve issues of traffic and encroachments in close collaboration with the MCF and traffic police.

Senior Vice President (SVP) FCCI Qaisar Shams Gucha appreciated the role of FCCI Standing Committees and assured that the business community would collaborate with concerned departments to make it a livable and attractive city.

Former SVP Dr Sajjad Arshad, Hajji Aslam Bhalli, Haji Abid, Ayub Aslam Manji, Muhammad Shehbaz, Waheed Khaliq Ramay, Shahid Malik, Mian Muhammad Anwaar, Aftab Butt, Rana Ikramullah and other business leaders pointed out different civic problems and vowed to cooperate with the traffic police and MCF.

Uzbek ambassador for increasing bilateral trade by \$1b

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Pakistan, Alisher Tukhtaev on Monday said that Uzbekistan and Pakistan's main goal is to significantly increase the volume of bilateral trade bringing it to \$1 billion initially.

In recent years, trade turnover between Uzbekistan and Pakistan has been growing steadily. For this, it is important to expand cooperation in all areas, deepen industrial collaboration, and create new trade directions, Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Pakistan, Alisher Tukhtaev told APP here.

The envoy said that now bilateral trade relations are developing steadily and

over the last 5 years, the bilateral trade turnover has increased almost 4 times, this figure amounted to \$122 million in 2019 and is expected to exceed \$400 million by the end of 2024.

The Ambassador said that priority steps can be to further improve the transport and logistics infrastructure connecting our countries.

He said that it is necessary to accelerate the circulation of goods by eliminating trade barriers and simplifying tariffs, licenses and customs procedures.

Alisher said "We need to fully implement the provisions of the Transit Trade and Preferential Trade Agreements (PTA) and also

necessary to systematically continue the practice of holding joint business forums and trade exhibitions."

He said the Preferential Trade Agreement between Uzbekistan and Pakistan is in force and "We are currently working to increase the list of preferential products under the Agreement from 17 to at least 100.

These events will provide a platform for businessmen to establish mutually beneficial contacts and discuss new projects, he said.

The Uzbek envoy said that it is also necessary to develop cooperative marketing strategies and establish information sharing

and this will open the way for trade and investment by removing barriers such as lack of information on the needs of our markets.

"Currently, the main areas of development of trade relations are agricultural products, textiles, pharmaceuticals, electrical engineering, automotive industry and energy sector and the negotiations are underway between the ministries of foreign trade to expand the range of goods," he said.

He said that the Governments of Uzbekistan and Pakistan are taking important steps to create favorable conditions for business.

The investment climate in Uzbekistan is constantly

improving, many benefits are being provided for entrepreneurs and new industrial zones are being launched, he said.

He said that most importantly, both of the countries are committed to developing economic cooperation and with the support of both governments and the active participation of the private sector, "we will certainly achieve our lofty goals."

Replying to a question on the future of trade and economic relations between Pakistan and Uzbekistan, he said the future of trade and economic relations between Uzbekistan and Pakistan is promising, and there are untapped opportu-

nities in a number of areas to further deepen cooperation between the two countries.

He said that Pakistan is interesting for the Uzbek market with its agricultural products, food, textile and leather products, while Uzbek industrial products, fruits and vegetables are in high demand in Pakistan.

In June 2024, the "Made in Pakistan" industrial exhibition was held in Tashkent, within the framework of which a number of new trade and investment agreements were signed, he said.

"We are planning to organize an exhibition of industrial products "Made in Uzbekistan" in Pakistan in 2025 and such events

will serve to expand the range of goods exported between our countries.

He said "I am confident that in the near future, we will ensure the practical implementation of the agreement of the Heads of our States to increase the volume of mutual trade to \$1 billion."

The Ambassador said the future of trade and economic relations between Uzbekistan and Pakistan is bright and strong political will serves to elevate this cooperation to a new level.

Replying to a question on Pakistan and Uzbekistan jointly playing their role in regional economic integration, he said that Uzbekistan and Pakistan, as

countries with significant strategic locations in Central and South Asia, play an important role in economic integration.

This will greatly contribute to the development of trade and transport links between the two countries, as well as the deepening of regional economic integration, he said.

Alisher Tukhtaev said the transport, logistics and transit capabilities of the two countries are creating favorable conditions for the growth of inter-regional trade and economic integration. The contribution of Uzbekistan and Pakistan to regional economic integration is steadily growing, he concluded.



In brief

M Ali Larosh bags National Badminton title

WAH CANTT (APP): M Ali Larosh from Wapda had bagged National Badminton Championship title by beating Pakistan No 1 Irfan Saeed also from Wapda in Chairman Pakistan Ordinance Factories (POF) Board National Ranking B a d m i n t o n Championship concluded in POF Sports Complex at Wah Cantt. In the Championship finals, Men Singles M Ali Larosh (Wapda) beat Pakistan No.1 Irfan Saeed (Wapda) by 21-13, 21-14 Women Singles Ghazala Siddique (Wapda) beat Mahoor Shahzad (Wapda) retired hurt (21-12, 4-1) Men Doubles Raja Zulqarnain Haider (Army) & M Ali Larosh (Wapda) beat Awais Zahid & Zunain Javed (Wapda) by 21-18, 21-16 Women Doubles, Saima Waqas (Wapda) & Ammarah Ishtiaq (Army) beat Palwasha Bashir (Sindh) & Ghazala Siddique (Wapda) by 21-15, 12-21, 21-10.

Pak Shaheen Club qualifies for semi finals

RAWALPINDI (APP): Pak Shaheen Club has qualified to the semi-finals of the ongoing Saleem Farani Memorial Football Tournament. The winning team won the quarter-final on penalty kicks against USGC. According to the details, the exciting matches of the Saleem Farani Memorial Football Tournament organized by the District Football Association are underway at the Municipal Stadium, Rawalpindi. In the third quarter-final of the tournament, Pak Shaheen Club defeated USGC by 4-2 goals on penalty kicks and qualified for the semi-finals. Earlier, the match remained undecided until the scheduled time, as no team could score any goal. Vice President Raja Ishtiaq Ahmed, Punjab Football Association congratulated the winning team and encouraged the players. A large number of fans were present at the ground. It should be noted that the fourth and final quarter-final of the tournament will be played between Al-Muslam Club and Zamindar Club tomorrow (Tuesday) at the Municipal Stadium.

Nani announces retirement

LONDON (Reuters): Former Portugal and Manchester United winger Nani announced his retirement on Sunday at the age of 38. Nani joined United in 2007 and went on to make 230 appearances for the club, scoring 41 goals. He won the Champions League in his first season and went on to win four Premier League titles and two League Cups in eight seasons. "The time has come to say goodbye, I have decided to finish my career as a professional player," Nani wrote on social media. "It's been an amazing ride and I wanted to thank every single person who has helped me and supported me through the highs and lows during a career which lasted over 20 years and gave me so many unforgettable memories. Time to turn a new leaf and focus on new goals and dreams. See you soon!" Nani, who has been playing in the Portuguese top flight this season for his hometown club Estrela Amadora, played his last game against his former club Sporting last month. He also played for Valencia, Lazio, Orlando City, Venezia, Melbourne Victory and Adana Demirspor. Nani scored 24 goals in 112 caps for Portugal, winning the European Championship in 2016.

ABL Stallions win two in two with victory over Nurpur Lions

RAWALPINDI (APP): ABL Stallions go top of the Bahria Town Champions T20 Cup points table with an impressive 12-run win over Nurpur Lions, achieving their second win in as many matches at Pindi Cricket Stadium Rawalpindi on Monday.

ABL Stallions were helped to 162-5 in 20 overs by a solid unbeaten 36-ball 51 by Hussain Talat who knocked his maiden T20 hundred in the team's victory over Lake City Panthers on Saturday. They then restricted Lions to 150-7 in 20 overs.

Shoaib Malik (2-23), Usman Tariq (2-23) and Zaman Khan (2-38) put brakes on the rival batting as Lions have now lost both their games. Lake City Panthers have won one and lost one while UMT Markhors have one win in one and Engro Dolphins have lost their only game.

Chasing 163 for victory, Lions got off to a worst possible start with opening batter Zeeshan Malik dismissed for a three-ball duck. It brought Imam-ul-Haq and Hasan Nawaz

together for a 71-run stand. Imam's 43 came off 28 balls inclusive of four boundaries and a six while Hasan's 25-ball 30 were studded with a six and three boundaries.

Rohail Nazir and Muhammad Awais Zafar fell for three each, leaving the Lions in a spot of bother. With the asking rate soaring, Khushdil Shah and Aamer Yamin came together with 66 needed in 43 deliveries which came down to 26 in 12. Mohammad Ali conceded just four runs in the penultimate over to almost seal the match. Zaman Khan, known for death overs mastery, gave away just nine to give Stallions victory. Khushdil scored 28 and Aamer made unbeaten 27 off 24 balls with the help of one six.

Hussain Talat was once again the architect of Stallions innings after they were sent into bat by Lions. He cracked five boundaries in his 36-ball knock, adding an invaluable 88 for the fifth wicket with team mentor-cum-player Shoaib Malik to steady the innings. Malik scored a 30-ball

39 with four boundaries. Mohammad Harris hit the only six of the innings in his 18-ball 25, also hitting two boundaries. Maaz Sadaqat once again showed his promise with a 29-ball 32 including five hits to the rope. Pacer Musa Khan was the pick of Lions' bowlers with 2-31.

Scores in brief: Match 4 – Allied Bank Stallions beat Nurpur Lions by 12 runs, Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium

Allied Bank Stallions 162-5 in 20 overs (Hussain Talat 51 not out, Shoaib Malik 39, Maaz Sadaqat 32, Mohammad Harris 25; Musa Khan 2-31)

Nurpur Lions 150-7 in 20 overs (Imam-ul-Haq 43, Hasan Nawaz 30, Khushdil Shah 28, Aamer Yamin 27; Shoaib Malik 2-23, Usman Tariq 2-23, Zaman Khan 2-38)

Player of the match – Shoaib Malik (Allied Bank Stallions)

Tomorrow's fixture: Engro Dolphins vs UMT Markhors, 12pm at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium.



GQEBERHA: A dejected Dhananjaya de Silva walks back after being dismissed for 50.

Pakistan ready to take on SA challenge in all-format series

DURBAN (APP): Pakistan is all set to face South Africa in an all-format series for the first time since 2019, which will begin with the first of three T20Is on Tuesday at the Kingsmead Stadium in Durban.

Pakistan's T20I squad reached Durban on Friday and has taken part in two training sessions. The second and third T20Is are scheduled to take place on 13 and 14 December at the SuperSport Park, Centurion and The Wanderers Stadium in Johannesburg, respectively. The three ODIs will be played on 17, 19 and 22 December followed by the Centurion Test on 26 December and Cape Town Test on 3 January.

Pakistan's T20I squad, which was announced on 4 December, has seen the return of white-ball captain Mohammad Rizwan, who was rested during the Zimbabwe T20I series. Babar Azam, Naseem Shah

and Shaheen Shah Afridi have also returned to the T20I squad after missing the Zimbabwe series.

Pakistan have won the last two bilateral T20I series between the two nations, beating South Africa at home in February 2021 by 2-1 and then in their backyard by 3-1 in April 2021. Mohammad Rizwan, Pakistan's T20I captain said: "We have been on the road since last month and this is our third successive overseas tour, which has made the unit more proactive in terms of the preparations and getting used to the local conditions as soon as possible."

"The return of Babar, Naseem and Shaheen to the white-ball squads is a welcome development for the team and with a fine blend of youth and experience, we look forward to do our best against South Africa in this T20I series before the focus shifts to the other two

formats. "The wickets in South Africa will challenge us but at the same time our pacers will benefit from the conditions as well. With the help of Allah, we are eager to continue the winning momentum from the last tour against Zimbabwe."

Pakistan T20I squad: Mohammad Rizwan (captain & wk), Abrar Ahmed, Babar Azam, Haris Rauf, Jahandad Khan, Mohammad Abbas Afridi, Mohammad Hasnain, Muhammad Irfan Khan, Omair Bin Yousuf, Saim Ayub, Salman Ali Agha, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Sufyan Moqim, Tayyab Tahir and Usman Khan (wk)

South Africa T20I squad: Heinrich Klaasen (captain), Otneil Baartman, Matthew Breetzke, Donovan Ferreira, Reeza Hendricks, Patrick Kruger, George Linde, Kwena Maphaka, David Miller, Anrich Nortje, Nqaba Peter, Ryan

Rickelton, Tabraiz Shamsi, Andile Simelane, Rassie van der Dussen

Schedule of matches: 10 Dec – 1st T20I vs South Africa at Kingsmead, Durban (9pm PKT) 13 Dec – 2nd T20I vs South Africa at SuperSport Park, Centurion (9pm PKT) 14 Dec – 3rd T20I vs South Africa at The Wanderers Stadium, Johannesburg (9pm PKT) 17 Dec – 1st ODI vs South Africa at Boland Bank Park, Paarl (5pm PKT) 19 Dec – 2nd ODI vs South Africa at Newlands Cricket Ground, Cape Town (5pm PKT) 22 Dec – 3rd ODI vs South Africa at The Wanderers Stadium, Johannesburg (5pm PKT) 26 Dec – 1st Test vs South Africa at SuperSport Park, Centurion (1pm PKT) 3 Jan – 2nd Test vs South Africa at Newlands Cricket Ground, Cape Town (1pm PKT).

COAS inter-club hockey c'ship to begin from Dec 20

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) has announced to start the 2nd Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) inter-club hockey championship from December 20 for the renaissance and promotion of the national sport and raw talent.

Addressing a press conference at the National Hockey Stadium here on Monday, PHF Secretary Rana Mujahid said that as many as 800 club will participate in the championship across the country, adding that the registration process will be held between December 11 and 15 while the scrutiny will be undertaken by the provincial hockey association till December 18.

Rana Mujahid, who was flanked by Pakistan Men's hockey head-coach Tahir

Zaman, Olympians Asif Bajwa and Anjum Saeed at the press conference, said the final of the 2nd COAS Inter-Club hockey championship will be played on February 15, 2025.

The PHF Secretary said the COAS inter-club hockey championship will be held in four stages and district level competitions will be held from December 20 to January 5 in the first stage while the divisional and regional level matches will be conducted from January 8 -13. The third-stage competitions will see the teams compete at the provincial level from January 15 to January 22 and the 10 club will compete at the national level in the fourth and last stage of the COAS championship. He further elaborated

that four teams from Punjab, two each from Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) while one each from Baluchistan, Islamabad, Azad Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit Baltistan (GB) will qualify for the national level last stage of the inter-club championship and all matches of the last stage will be played at National Hockey Stadium, Lahore.

Thanking Chief of the Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir for his patronage of Pakistan hockey, PHF Secretary Rana Mujahid said the 2nd COAS inter-club hockey championship is an endeavor to discover raw talent among the youth of Pakistan so that these young players could serve the cause of hockey in future.

Girona need 'magic' to beat Liverpool: coach



GIRONA (AFP): Girona coach Michel Sanchez said his team needs "magic" from fans at their tiny Montilivi stadium to overcome English giants Liverpool in the Champions League on Tuesday.

The Catalan minnows, competing in the competition for the first time in their history, welcome the Premier League leaders who also head the European group table with a 100 percent record. By contrast Girona sit 30th with four defeats from their opening five games, and are fighting to survive in the competition.

"We will have to run more than ever, but we can do it, of course," Sanchez told reporters. "They dominate in every way, and that is why we have to think about ourselves, be ourselves and give the best version of ourselves. "We will see, with the atmosphere that we have to create... we need the magic of Montilivi to make history."

Due to UEFA regulations, Girona's already small capacity is further reduced to under 10,000 seats for European competition.

However the lucky few fans inside the stadium will witness a match which Sanchez said he has been waiting to play for years. "For me it means a lot, it was a dream as a player, I played in the Europa League with Rayo (Vallecano), reaching the quarter-finals and Liverpool were there as well," said Sanchez.

Rayo were knocked out in the last eight by Spanish side Alaves, whom Liverpool eventually defeated in the 2001 final in a 5-4 thriller. "At Rayo we always sang 'Next year Rayo vs Liverpool', that was the dream."

"After we reached the Champions League it was an opponent I wanted... it will be a special day for Girona, the club, the team and the fans. "We have to enjoy it and compete at 100 percent." Sanchez said his dream was now to beat Liverpool 1-0 with veteran Uruguayan striker Cristhian Stuani scoring a 90th-minute winner.

The coach explained his team would try to shut down Egyptian winger Mohamed Salah and warned his players they had to be extremely careful after losing the ball. "There is always the possibility of controlling a player, every team tries to do that -- (Salah) is in incredible form," added Michel. "The data says that we are a team that defends well, but there are times when we stop doing it, like in transition and that is where Liverpool are the best team in the world."

Siraj and Head penalised for Adelaide altercation

ADELAIDE (Reuters): Mohammed Siraj and Travis Head have been slapped with demerit points for their bust-up in the second test between India and Australia while the Indian fast bowler was also fined 20% of his match fee, the International Cricket Council said on Monday.

The duo had a fiery exchange after Siraj dismissed Australia batter Head in the pink ball test in Adelaide, which Australia won by 10 wickets to level the five-match series 1-1 at the Adelaide Oval on Sunday.

"Siraj has been penalised 20% of his match fee after being found guilty of breaching article 2.5 of the ICC Code of Conduct..." the ICC said in a statement.

"Head too was sanctioned for breaching Article 2.13 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which relates to the 'abuse of a player, player support personnel, umpire or match referee during an international match'." "Siraj and Head received one demerit point each on their disciplinary records, marking their first offence within the last 24 months." The ICC added that both players had accepted the sanctions.

Head struck a match-winning 140 before being bowled by Siraj having hit the bowler for a six in the previous ball. A fired-up Siraj gave a send-off after the dismissal and the duo were seen exchanging words before Head walked off.

On behalf of our entire league

Player of the match Head later said he had jokingly said "well bowled" to Siraj, but the Indian bowler contradicted that claim. Head and Siraj shook hands at the end of play, however, and both sides have tried to play down the incident. The teams have been involved in several controversies in the past, including the infamous 'monkey-gate' scandal.

Bavuma hails team effort after South Africa seal series win

GQEBERHA (AFP): South African captain Temba Bavuma said his team's 109-run win in the second Test against Sri Lanka at St George's Park on Monday was a big step forward for a largely inexperienced group of players.

"For a lot of the guys it was a proper taste of what Test cricket is about," said Bavuma of a hard-fought match which went into the fifth day. "It's rare when you get to play for five days and it's also rare when the game is always in the balance. There were times when we were on top and times when Sri Lanka were getting the momentum on their side."

The win put South Africa on top of the World Test Championship table, which is based on average points gained. South Africa can make certain of qualifying for the final at Lord's in England next June if they beat Pakistan in a two-match series which starts on December 26.

"The championship table looks good," said Bavuma during the post-match presentation. "We see ourselves at number one with two games

to go. I don't know what the maths looks like but we're playing good cricket and we want it to continue."

Bavuma was named player of the series after scoring 327 runs in four innings, with a century and three fifties, but said other individuals in the team were making major contributions.

Three South Africans made centuries and three bowlers had five-wicket hauls, including left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj, who took five for 76 to seal Monday's win.

"It's always a good sign when guys are putting in match-winning performances. It speaks to the hunger and desire amongst the team."

Sri Lankan captain Dhananjaya de Silva said his team had improved on their performance in Durban, where they were beaten by 233 runs after being blown away for 42 in the first innings.

"The guys fought hard but it was not good enough," said De Silva. "The bowling attack that South Africa had kept asking questions."

De Silva said Sri Lanka were

improving in away Test matches. "We're getting better but we need to be 100 percent better in every department," he said.

Sri Lanka lost their remaining five wickets for 33 runs on Monday.

Their hopes of an upset win were extinguished when overnight batsmen De Silva and Kusal Mendis were dismissed inside the first 10 overs of the day.

De Silva and Mendis, the team's last recognised batsmen, resumed on 205 for five, still needing 143 runs to win.

Maharaj made the first breakthrough when Mendis edged a low catch to Aiden Markram at slip. He made 46 in a 97-run sixth wicket partnership with De Silva.

Kagiso Rabada then had De Silva caught behind for 50, exposing the Sri Lankan tail.

The last three wickets fell quickly with Maharaj claiming two more scalps and Marco Jansen finishing the match with his first ball of the day when Lahiru Kumara was caught off a wild slog.

Man City hearing into 115 Premier League charges concludes - reports

LONDON (AFP): Manchester City's long-awaited hearing into 115 breaches of Premier League rules has concluded, according to reports on Monday, but a verdict is not expected until 2025.

The Daily Mail reported that closing arguments in the case, which opened on September 16 at London's International Dispute Resolution Centre, were made to an independent panel on Friday.

City strongly deny any wrongdoing, but face severe sanctions if found guilty, including potentially being relegated from the Premier League.

Everton and Nottingham Forest suffered points deductions last season for breaches of the league's profit and sustainability rules.

The English champions stand accused of 80 breaches of financial rules between 2009 and 2018, plus a further 35 of failing to cooperate with a Premier League investigation.

Since a 2008 takeover from Sheikh Mansour, a member of the United Arab Emirates royal family, City have been transformed into the dominant force in English football. They have won eight of the last 13 Premier League titles, including a record four consecutive league crowns in the past four seasons.

City also lifted the Champions League for the first time in 2023.



Those achievements have been clouded in controversy, with opposing fans often making reference to the charges City face.

However, the club have always protested their innocence and vowed to clear their name.

The Premier League brought the charges in February 2023 but there has been a long wait for the case to proceed before an independent commission.

City stand accused of failing to provide accurate financial information between 2009 and 2018, including revenue from sponsors and

salary details of managers and players.

Other charges relate to breaches of both UEFA and the Premier League's financial sustainability regulations.

Even if City are found guilty of some or all of the charges by the commission, the club would likely appeal that decision, which would further delay the imposition of any sanctions.

On the field, Pep Guardiola's men are going through an lean spell with just one win from their last nine games in all competitions.



In brief

IRSA releases 84,200 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 84,200 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 39,700 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1482.78 feet and was 84.78 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 18,900 cusecs and 43,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1147.85 feet, which was 97.85 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 4,600 cusecs and 25,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 44,200, 45,500, 37,700 and 8,700 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 9,800 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 2,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

ANF arrest 12 accused

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), during its 11 operations against drug smuggling across the country, have arrested 12 accused with a total of 251.34 kilograms of drugs worth over Rs 60 million. According to an ANF spokesman, an ANF Balochistan team arrested an accused with 160 narcotic pills and 100 grams of ice near a university on Moti Ram Road, Quetta. The accused during the investigation confessed to selling drugs to students of educational institutions. About 137 kg of opium was recovered during an operation in Nokundi, Balochistan, the spokesman said. He further said 95 grams of heroin concealed in a ladies bag was recovered from a courier company in Islamabad. The parcel was being sent to the United Kingdom. Two accused were arrested in two operations on M-1 Islamabad with 34.4 kg hashish, 30 kg opium, 10 kg heroin and 5 kg ice, while a Nigerian was held with a cocaine-filled capsule and 300 grams ice in Sector E/11, he added. Likewise, the spokesman said, three accused were arrested near Kamoke Toll Plaza, Gujranwala with 12 kg hashish and 2.4 kg opium, while 3.59 kg heroin and two drones were recovered from two accused in separate operations in Sheikhupura. Similarly, 9.6 kg hashish was recovered from an accused on National Highway near Hyderabad, and 6 kg hashish from two accused near a restaurant in Shikarpur.

Robber gang busted

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Ratta Amral Police on Monday busted a three-member gang involved in robbery incidents. Stolen money of Rs 110,000 along with weapons and a motorcycle used in the robbery incidents were also recovered from the accused Najibullah, Zeeshan and Noman, a Rawalpindi Police spokesman said. He said that the suspects would be sent to jail for an identity parade. Meanwhile, the Ratta Amral Police arrested a proclaimed offender Noman, who along with his accomplices had stabbed a citizen Khalid to death and injured Asif and Arshad in July this year. His five accomplices were already in custody, the spokesman said.

Mushaal highlights global inaction on IIOJK atrocities

ISLAMABAD (APP): Mushaal Hussein Mullick, wife of unlawfully incarcerated Kashmiri leader Yasin Malik, expressed her deep concern over the international community's silence on the atrocities committed by Indian Occupation forces in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), saying the region had been turned into a graveyard for children.

Mushaal, Chairperson of the Peace and Culture Organisation, strongly condemned the atrocities committed by Indian forces in the occupied valley, drawing parallels with the Zionist forces' brutal actions against children in Gaza. She emphasized that both regions have become graveyards for children. She made these remarks while speaking as chief guest at Human Rights Photo Exhibition, organized by Human Rights Council Pakistan at Pak China Friendship Centre here Monday.

The chairperson said that the fascist forces unleashed a wave of terrorism and committed war crimes in the occupied valley, as they converted

the region into a slaughterhouse and killing field.

She highlighted that the top Hurriyat leaders including her husband Yasin Malik were kept in unlawful incarceration by implicating in absurd, concocted and fabricated cases. However, Mushaal rued that ironically the so-called human rights organizations and world powers observed criminal silence in this regard largely because of the economic and financial interests.

She urged the international community to take immediate action to stop the genocide and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians and Kashmiris, particularly children, who have borne the brunt of these conflicts.

The chairperson revealed the shocking truth about the fascist occupation troopers' brutality in the scenic valley, where 922 children have been martyred over the past 36 years, adding that more disturbing was the deafening silence from human rights and child rights organizations, who failed to speak out against these atrocities.

The hurriyat leader expressed utter shock and dismay at the lack of response from these organizations, emphasizing that the children's deaths were a result of the notorious regime's policy of ethnic cleansing of Kashmiris. Mushaal highlighted the disturbing reality of Indian forces' brutality in Kashmir, where children, women, and youth were deliberately targeted. Since 1989, 2,353 women have been killed, 11,265 molested, and 22,980 widowed due to Indian state terrorism.

The chairperson noted that, historically, women and children have been recognized as non-combatants, deserving protection in conflicts. However, she lamented that this principle has been grossly violated in Kashmir and Palestine, where women and children have become disproportionately vulnerable to violence, displacement, and egregious human rights abuses.

Mushaal urged the UN and global powers to hold India accountable and take concrete steps to resolve the Kashmir dispute, ending the suffering of Kashmiris once and for all.



ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi presenting a bouquet to Wafaqul Madaris' Patron-in-Chief Maulana Fazl Rahim Ashrafi. —APP Photo

Danyal, Abbasi jointly prompt action to address city's issues

ISLAMABAD (APP): Barrister Danyal Chaudhry, Parliamentary Secretary for Information and Broadcasting, and Member of National Assembly Muhammad Hanif Abbasi on Monday jointly visited the WASA Rawalpindi headquarters to address urgent issues regarding the city's water supply.

The meeting addressed the challenges in Rawalpindi, particularly in the NA-57 and NA-56 constituencies.

The WASA team outlined their current efforts in water resource management, including rainwater harvesting projects, and suggested sustainable solutions for managing groundwater.

Barrister Danyal lauded WASA's efforts and emphasized the need for continued collaboration on groundwater investigations, water quality assessments, and staff training. WASA reiterated its commitment to resolving

the water supply issues in the region.

In a separate initiative, Barrister Danyal Chaudhry, together with the City Traffic Police Rawalpindi and MNA Muhammad Hanif Abbasi, inaugurated a new Driving License Center on Rawal Road, Rawalpindi. This new facility aims to address the growing demand for driving licenses and provide much-needed convenience to the residents of Rawalpindi city.

Ombudsman advocates for good governance and Human Rights

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Wafaqi Mohtasib (Ombudsman), Mr. Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi has said that addressing maladministration and protection of human rights is inextricably linked to good governance, accountability and inclusivity. He was addressing the International Ombudsman Summit - 2024 in Hong Kong organized on the eve of the 35th anniversary of the establishment of the Office of the Ombudsman in Hong Kong, China.

Mr. Qureshi, who is the current President of the 47-member strong Asian Ombudsman Association (AOA), said that the United Nations, too, recognizes the importance of the



institution of Ombudsman in strengthening democracy, good governance and the rule of law. Good administration and efficient service delivery constitute the most essential features of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), he added.

He further said that these goals have a direct bearing on the role and functions of Ombudsman institutions working to build peaceful and inclusive societies,

accountable institutions at all levels and providing easy access to justice. He added that the scope of work of Ombudsman institutions is witnessing speedy expansion and now includes issues like the climate change, business rights, public accessibility and inclusivity.

Alluding to Pakistan's experience, Mr. Qureshi said that Ombudsmanship has taken firm roots in the country. Following the success of Wafaqi Mohtasib

Institution in providing free and expeditious administrative justice to the general public, the concept has been replicated to other essential areas impacting the welfare of general public. He added that 14 Ombudsman Institutions are functioning in the country at the Federal and Provincial levels and contributing in improving service delivery of the government agencies in their respective areas of competence.

The International Ombudsman Summit at Hong Kong is being attended by over 140 Overseas participants, representatives of the UN bodies including a large number of the member institutions of the Asian Ombudsman Association (AOA).

Pakistan's warriors against gender-based violence honored at Swedish embassy

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of Sweden, in collaboration with UN Women Pakistan, hosted an event at the Swedish Ambassador's residence to recognize Pakistan's Gender Empowerment Champions. The occasion celebrated the outstanding contributions of individuals and organizations dedicated to eradicating gender-based violence, promoting women's empowerment, and advancing gender equality in the country.

The event was a key part of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, a global campaign that emphasizes the urgent need to eliminate violence against women and girls. With the theme #KoIJaWaZNaHi (#NoExcuse), the evening underscored a shared commitment to building a gender-equal society.

The program began with a warm welcome from the Ambassador of Sweden, highlighting the collaborative efforts of Sweden and Pakistan in championing gender equality. Swedish Ambassador Alexandra Berg von Linde stated, "Sweden has a long-standing commitment on working for gender equality and against gender-based violence – at home and global-



ly. Combatting sexual and gender-based violence is not only a women's issue. It is a joint effort where all parts of society need to engage. Together, we can ensure that women and girls can live free from fear and violence and are given the opportunity to reach their full potential."

Jamshed Kazi, UN Women Pakistan Country Representative designate, also addressed the gathering, stressing the significance of joint action. He said, "The progress we seek in eliminating gender-based violence and achieving gender equality requires the unwavering commitment of every individual, organization, and institution. Events like these remind us of the power of collaboration and the impact of our combined efforts." He further added, "Today, we honor the champions who have made it their mission to advance

women's rights and create safe, equitable spaces for all. Their unwavering dedication inspires us to continue working towards a society free of gender-based violence."

The evening featured a screening of the Theatre on Wheels campaign video, showcasing of UN Women's Rolling Resistance initiative. This innovative mobile theatre project has journeyed across Pakistan, engaging communities in dialogue and raising awareness about the urgent need to address gender-based violence.

A key highlight of the event was the award ceremony, which celebrated gender champions who have significantly contributed to advancing women's rights and empowerment in Pakistan. The honorees, representing various sectors such as civil society and policymaking,

embodied the spirit of International Women's Day (IWD) pledges.

The program concluded with remarks by Romina Khurshid Alam, Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change and Environment Coordination, who reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to gender equality. She stated, "We recognize the critical contributions of these gender champions in shaping a brighter future for Pakistan. Their work is a testament to what we can achieve when we unite for a common cause."

The evening ended with a symbolic candle and air lantern lighting ceremony, representing hope, resilience, and a collective resolve to end violence against women. Attendees also participated in a photo session, capturing the unity and determination of the movement.

The event highlighted the strength of partnerships and the importance of celebrating those who work tirelessly for women's empowerment. Together, UN Women and the Embassy of Sweden remain committed to amplifying the voices of change-makers, fostering a future where every woman and girl can thrive in safety, equality, and dignity.

Five arrested in APP fake appointments case

ISLAMABAD (APP): Five individuals who were allegedly involved in the Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) fake appointment case were taken into custody after the dismissal of their interim bail by the Special Judge FIA Court, Hamayoun Dilawar, on Monday.

The accused include former Manager Accounts Arshad Majeed, his son Taimoor Arshad, Saad Yousaf, Qaiser Javed and Fawad Khan The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) initiated the case, alleging the involvement of the accused in facilitating fraudulent appointments within the APP. Investigation Officer Ehtesham Gondal opposed the pre-arrest bail petitions, arguing that sufficient evidence had been collected to substantiate the charges. The court, after hearing the arguments, rejected the

pleas and ordered the arrest of the accused.

Representing APP, lawyer Hussnain Haider Thaheem argued that Arshad Majeed played a pivotal role in enabling the disbursement of salaries to 20 individuals appointed without legitimate documentation. He informed the court that the investigation revealed irregularities that pointed to systematic misuse of authority, with Arshad Majeed allegedly at the center of the scheme.

Thaheem further requested the court to include the names of former Assistant of Accounts Moazzam Javed Khokhar and former Manager HR Khawaja Asif in the FIR. He claimed their roles required further scrutiny to ensure accountability and fairness in the investigation. The FIA had earlier stated that the fake appointments caused a significant financial loss to the APP and

undermined transparency in its recruitment processes. The agency continued its investigation to identify additional individuals involved in the alleged fraud.

It is to be mentioned that the FIA had registered an FIR against 20 individuals who were fraudulently appointed by Moazzam Javed Khokhar, Haseeb Ahsan, Former Manager HR and Afzal Hans by using fake signatures of Managing Director APP, and other officers.

They also allegedly took huge amounts from the accused as bribes for illegally appointing them in APP by misusing their authority and causing massive financial loss to the public exchequer.

The court's decision marked a critical step in addressing the issue, with further hearings expected to focus on the evidence presented by the FIA.

Murree snowfall, Rescue-1122 put on high alert

RAWALPINDI (APP): District Emergency Service Rescue -1122 remained alert is actively working in the Murree areas during the snowfall. According to the details, Rescue-1122 Murree is continuing to provide timely response to road traffic accidents, medical emergencies and other emergencies in the district as per the 'season snowfall emergency cover plan' of the district administration. The rescue service has been deployed during the snowfall with its utmost priority of medical first aid road accidents.

Media coordinator,

Muhammad Usman informed APP that emergency transfer of critically ill patients from Civil Hospital Murree to various hospitals in Rawalpindi and Islamabad is also among the swift emergency operations as and when required.

He said that the Rescue 1122 control room remained operational 24/7, timely relief operations were underway on every call received on the helpline 1122. orders have also been issued to the rescue personnel to remain alert to deal with any emergency situation. According to the spokesperson of Rescue 1122 Murree, Rescue

1122 Murree is actively working for the safety of the citizens. "Rescue-1122 is ensuring round-the-clock measures in case of any emergency", he said.

The administration also completed the snow clearance process from the roads to the first snowfall of the winter season. Moreover, the administration has set up Facilitation Centers at 13 different locations to provide necessary information and guide the tourists.

It is worth mentioning that PDM had already forecasted the snowfall in Murree for Sunday and Monday.

IACD Observes International Anti-Corruption Day

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI), a not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting transparency, good governance, strong local governments, and the right to information laws, is raising its voice for a corruption-free governance system in Pakistan on International Anti-Corruption Day (IACD), celebrated globally. Observed annually on December 9, IACD commemorates the adoption of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) in 2003.

This day highlights the recognition of corruption as a significant barrier to development, democracy, social justice, and good governance. With 190 countries, including Pakistan, committed to the UNCAC, there is a global consensus on the need for effective measures against corruption. This year's theme, "Uniting with Youth Against Corruption: Shaping

Tomorrow's Integrity," emphasizes the vital role young people play in combating corruption and promoting integrity.

On this day, Mukhtar Ahmad Ali Executive Director CPDI remarked that as the world celebrates International Anti-corruption day, it is important to reaffirm our commitment to strengthen official mechanisms to prevent and counter corruption through right to information laws, transparent budgets and procurements, whistleblowers' protection, political finance reforms, effective investigation and prosecution of corruption cases, and robust cooperation among states to recover and return to victims the proceeds of corrupt practices.

He added that, in Pakistan, the fight against corruption has seen significant challenges, as Pakistan continues to rank very low on the corruption perception index. According to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI),

Pakistan ranked at 140th in 2022 and 133rd in 2023, with a CPI score of 27 to 29 respectively.

In comparison, several other South Asian countries show a better ranking: India ranks 85 with a score of 39, Nepal ranks 107 with a score of 36, and Bhutan ranks 45 with a score of 62. Corruption is a major factor that adversely affects peoples access to public services and alienates them from the government organizations.

To combat corruption, Pakistan has enacted several laws including the provincial anti-corruptions laws and the National Accountability Ordinance (NAO) 1999. Under these laws, the key institutions with the mandate to investigate and prosecute corruption cases include the provincial anti-corruption establishments and the National Accountability Bureau (NAB). The NAO underwent significant amendments in 2022 whereby the police remand period for alleged corrupt persons was reduced and the powers of NAB were cur-

tailed, largely in response to the growing perception that NAB was being used for political objectives.

Over the last decade, Pakistan has also enacted right to information laws, which have helped, to some extent, in improving transparency and peoples' access to information in official matters. Moreover, Pakistan has signed and ratified the UNCAC 2003, which sets standards and provides a framework for cooperation among members states for preventing and combating corruption. It is, however, worrying that successive governments in Pakistan have not been successful in recovering and returning proceeds of corrupt practices from abroad to the victim communities.

As we observe International Anti-Corruption Day, it is crucial to recognize that eradicating corruption is a collective responsibility. While Pakistan has made progress in terms of enacting relevant laws, it continues to face major challenges in ensuring transparent, effective and non-parti-

san implementation of laws to prevent, investigate and prosecute cases of corruption. It is, therefore, imperative that Pakistan strengthens its governance mechanisms, dispels the perception that anti-corruption laws are used for partisan objectives, and enhances the capacity of relevant institutions to effectively investigate and prosecute corruption cases.

A strong enforcement framework is essential to discourage corrupt practices in public and private sectors to curb crimes and build a just society. Promoting a culture of accountability, where individuals can question public officials, is vital. It must also be recognized that free and independent media and civil society organizations play a key role in exposing corruption and highlighting weaknesses in the enforcement of anti-corruption laws. By fostering ethical values and public accountability, we can work together towards a corruption-free society built on transparency and integrity.

Shaheen hold meeting

KABUL (BNA): Mohammad Suhail Shaheen, head of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan's Political Office in Doha, recently announced his meeting with the Dutch Ambassador and the German Chargé d'Affaires for Afghanistan. Shaheen shared on his X account that he held discussions with Laetitia van Asch, the Dutch Ambassador for Afghanistan, and Rolf Dieter Reinhard the German Chargé d'Affaires for Afghanistan.

Military vehicles restored

KABUL (BNA): The Ministry of Defense announced the successful repair and reinstatement of 27 military vehicles. According to the ministry, the vehicles were restored by technical and professional teams of the Fifth Logistics Battalion under the Third Brigade of Abu Dujana Corps, 205th Al-Badr Army Corps. The repaired vehicles include 11 International trucks and 16 Humvee tanks, now ready for operational use.

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

Healthcare center inaugurated

FARAH (TOLOnews): A healthcare center, built at a cost of \$300,000, has been inaugurated in the Khak Safid district of Farah province. Local officials state that the center has the capacity to treat at least 300 patients daily.

"This project will be implemented here for 10 months, and we hope it will be extended and its services continued in the future," said Ehsanullah Shakir, head of public health in Farah province.

"Healthcare services in Farah, especially in Khak Safid district, are insufficient. We request more attention be given to this area," said Jamaluddin Jalali, the head of the economy department in Farah.

Meanwhile, officials from national and international aid organizations have announced plans to construct several other healthcare centers in Farah province soon. "Our services are provided in accordance with standards, and all the necessary equipment will be used in these centers according to those standards," said Abdul Jalil Farogh, head of the Women's Global Organization in Farah.

"In total, 15 permanent healthcare centers are planned in Farah province. Out of these, three centers have been activated, one of which was inaugurated today. Additionally, eight other centers have been

dedicated solely to providing services in Khak Safid district," said Abdul Wahid Rahimi, another aid official in Farah.

Residents of Khak Safid district are calling for more healthcare centers and improved services.

"Facilities for childbirth should be provided so that women do not need to be transferred to the city. Furthermore, more attention should be given to addressing child malnutrition," said Allahdad, a resident of Farah.

Officials emphasize that Khak Safid is one of the remote areas of Farah province, where most residents have limited access to healthcare services and require greater attention.

Solar plant to supply power across eastern provinces

KABUL (BNA): The Islamic Emirate has initiated efforts to supply electricity to eastern Afghanistan using solar energy.

According to this plan, a solar power plant is set to be constructed in the Dasht area of Mehtarlam City, the center of the eastern Nangarhar province. Engineer Idris, head of the assessment team at the Ministry of Energy and Water, told Bakhtar News Agency that the plant will have a production capacity of 100 megawatts of electricity.

The project, which is expected to supply power to Nangarhar, Laghman, Kunar, and Nuristan provinces, will cost 80 million USD. The Ministry's assessment team stated that practical work on constructing the solar power plant will begin soon.

Afghanistan's climate is highly suitable for generating solar, wind, and hydropower.

Over the past three years, the Islamic Emirate has made significant efforts to produce domestic energy. With the successful implementation of these initiatives, Afghanistan will no longer need to import electricity from neighboring countries.

Photos sharing on social media banned

KABUL (Amu TV): Taliban have prohibited the publication of children's photos on social media platforms, including YouTube, X, Facebook, and Instagram, in Ghor province, according to local sources who shared a copy of an official Taliban directive with Amu TV.

The directive, issued by the Taliban's Ministry of Information and Culture under document number 2063, states: "Based on the decision of the joint committee of Emirate (Taliban) and non-Emirate departments on child protection, publishing or broadcasting images of innocent children on mass media platforms, such as YouTube, X, Facebook, and other channels that harm their dignity, is prohibited."

Taliban justified the decision by accusing some media outlets of being "biased" and claimed that reports about children are presented in ways that "harm the child's dignity and family reputation and put the child's life at risk."

The directive also extends to YouTubers and other media professionals in Ghor, ordering them to refrain from sharing photos of children on their social media accounts.

This latest ban is part of a broader pattern of media restrictions imposed by the Taliban.

Previously, the Taliban prohibited the broadcasting of images of living beings on television in over six provinces, citing similar concerns.

Media advocacy organizations have criticized these measures, describing them as an expansion of censorship that further restricts the flow of information in Afghanistan.

China provides vital aid for 27,500 displaced families



KABUL (TOLOnews): China has handed over aid packages for more than 27,500 displaced families to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

These Chinese aid packages include blankets, kitchen sets, barrels, and plastic tarpaulins, which will be distributed to displaced families.

Arafat Jamal, the UNHCR Representative in Afghanistan, said during the handover ceremony: "Through this very gener-

ous assistance, we will be able to help 175,000 Afghans in need of assistance. The assistance provided is basic items that will help people to survive the winter."

Welcoming China's initiative, he called on the international community not to forget Afghanistan.

Arafat Jamal added: "We appeal to the international community. Don't forget Afghanistan. We know that there are many crises in the world, but here we have an opportunity. Despite many

challenges ahead of us, people are voting with their feet."

Jamal described the return of Afghan refugees from Pakistan and Iran as one of the significant challenges and said that the UNHCR must work with the Afghan people to ensure these returns are predictable and sustainable.

The UNHCR chief emphasized: "Our challenge, as UNHCR and together with the people of Afghanistan, is to make sure that those returns

occur in a predictable, stable manner, and that people coming back from Pakistan and Iran are able to contribute to economic growth in this country, to stability."

Meanwhile, an advisor to the Chinese Embassy in Afghanistan expressed satisfaction with China's assistance to vulnerable individuals in Afghanistan, noting that the distribution of these items comes at a very opportune time as winter approaches and families need more support.

Jalali engages UN officials to enhance health services



KABUL (BNA): The Acting Minister of Public Health assured efforts to resolve all issues that would lead to the expansion and strengthening of the health system during a meeting with United Nations officials for Afghanistan.

According to a statement from the Ministry's press office, Mawlawi Noor Jalal Jalali, Acting Minister of Public Health, met with Edwin Ceniza Salvador,

WHO Representative in Afghanistan; Kwabena Asante-Ntiemoah, UNFPA Country Representative; Hadiya Samaha, World Bank Representative; and UNICEF health officials at his office.

Discussions during the meeting focused on addressing current challenges in Afghanistan's health sector, strengthening the healthcare system, and attracting international aid.

Mawlawi Noor Jalal Jalali emphasized the Ministry's commitment to working with international partners to enhance healthcare services in line with the population's needs, addressing patient health concerns effectively, and resolving existing issues. He reiterated his dedication to overcoming all obstacles that hinder the growth and fortification of the nation's health system.

Chashma-e-Bid residents seek basic facilities

B A D A K H S H A N (TOLOnews): Residents of more than 300 families in the village of Chashma-e-Bid Darah-e-Jozgon, located in Faizabad, the capital of Badakhshan province, say they are facing serious challenges such as poor road conditions and the lack of health centers, and schools.

They have called on the officials of the caretaker government to address these issues. "We don't have a clinic we don't have a school. There is a school, but it's in a very remote area, and we are facing

many difficulties," said Amir Mohammad, a resident of this village.

"Sometimes, we are forced to use ID cards to transport patients because there is no road for vehicles to pass through," said Abdul Azim, another resident of this village.

"Our children cannot even go to school. When it rains, we cannot access the provincial center for three to four days," said Naseer Ahmad, another resident.

Meanwhile, Hikmatullah Mohammadi, head of information at the Directorate of Information and Culture of

Badakhshan, pledged that these issues will be addressed.

"If there are problems in terms of roads and health facilities, we will discuss them with the relevant officials, and the institutions will address them," he said.

Badakhshan province, located in the northeast of the country, is among the regions where residents, especially in districts, face challenges such as lack of health centers, schools, electricity, and damaged roads. They have repeatedly called on officials to resolve these problems.

Agreement signed to strengthen education in Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Education Above All Foundation (EAA) have announced the signing of a \$50 million agreement to support educational programs in Afghanistan. The goal of this agreement, as stated by the organizations, is to provide financial assistance to enroll 100,000 out-of-school children and to offer 2,000 scholarships for Afghan students. Strengthening the education sector in Afghanistan is also one of the objectives outlined in the agreement.

Cotton yield triples in Sar-e-Pol, farmers still face challenges

SAR-E-POL (TOLOnews): The Department of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock of Sar-e-Pol province said cotton yields in the province have nearly tripled compared to last year.

According to officials, this year approximately 500 tons of cotton will be harvested from 500 hectares of land in Sar-e-Pol, while this figure stood at 135 tons last year.

"This year, it is predicted that 500 tons of cotton will be harvested from 500

hectares of land, whereas in 2023, this amount was 135 tons," said Sharifullah Mosadeq, head of the agricultural division of the department.

Despite the increased yields, farmers in the province cited the spread of crop pests, a decline in cotton prices, and a lack of proper markets as serious challenges. They are urging the export of this product to global markets.

"We ask national and international traders to pur-

chase our cotton products and export them to other countries because we work hard to produce this crop," said Abdul Qudoos, one of the farmers.

"Four years ago, when cotton was being exported abroad, its price would reach up to 700 afghani. However, now, with what I think are challenges in exports, its domestic price is between 300 and 350 afghani, which doesn't even cover our costs," said Ali Mohammad, another

farmer.

"I planted 12 jeribs of cotton, but due to the increase in crop pests and the decline in prices, we can't even recover our production costs," said Khan, another farmer.

According to cotton sellers in Sar-e-Pol, the price of one ser of cotton has dropped from 700 afghani to 350 afghani in recent years, a significant decrease that has had a major negative impact on farmers' livelihoods.

Customs chief criticizes stranded oil tankers at Islam Qala border

KABUL (Khaama Press): Farud Asgari, the Head of Iran's Customs, has criticized that around 30 oil tankers carrying transit oil from Iraq have been stranded at the Islam Qala customs in Afghanistan.

Iranian media reported on Sunday, December, 8, citing the country's official, that Iranian truck drivers are allowed to either unload their cargo in Afghanistan or return through the Iranian route to Iraq.

Asgari stated, "We are unable to guarantee the cargo for Iranian drivers stuck in Afghanistan because the goods belong to a foreign seller and a foreign buyer, and as Iran's customs, we cannot make decisions regarding the cargo."

He called on the Taliban regime to address the issue with Iraq and find a resolution.

More than 100 Iranian oil tankers had been stopped at Islam Qala around three months ago due to being deemed "non-standard," with around



70 tankers able to leave the border.

This comes at a time when, in recent years, hundreds of oil tankers have been returned from Afghanistan to Iran due to "poor quality."

The issue of stranded oil tankers highlights the ongoing trade challenges between Iran and Afghanistan. It underscores the complexities of cross-border logistics and the need for effective communication and cooperation between neighboring

countries to resolve trade-related issues.

Both governments must find a mutually beneficial solution to ensure the smooth flow of goods, maintaining the stability of trade routes and avoiding disruptions to regional commerce. Effective coordination is essential for fostering good diplomatic and trade relations between Afghanistan and Iran, especially in the energy sector.

Faryab residents want proper disposal of medical waste

MAIMANA (Pajhwok): Some residents of Maimana City, the capital of northern Faryab, complain about improper disposal of medical waste by health centers, fearing it risks instigating a serious threat to the environment and public health. However, officials claim they have controlled this issue by up to 70%.

According to them, some health centers, laboratories, and clinics throw hazardous medical waste in trash bins or along roadsides, which causes environmental pollution and increases the spread of diseases in the community.

The head of the Environmental Protection Department in Faryab says that after the formation of a provincial committee, 60 to 70% of healthcare waste has been controlled, and

several health centers have been advised and sealed.

Mohammad Naseem, a resident of Maimana, says some health centers and clinics throw blood-contaminated and infectious waste into municipal trashcans, which is very dangerous. He added that he has often seen poor individuals and children searching for and collecting bottles, papers, and other items from the garbage, exposing themselves and their families to various diseases from the medical waste present.

Sakhi Murad, head of cleanliness section in Municipality, acknowledged that some health centers and doctors disposed of their medical waste unsafely out in the open in municipality's trash bins, which has repeatedly caused

injuries to cleaning staff from needles and sharp glasses.

However, the cleaning director said that for several months, the disposal of medical waste on roads and in drains has been prevented, and those who continue to act recklessly should be legally dealt with by the authorities.

Dr. Mohammad Zarif Ayubi, owner of Ayubi Hospital, says that health centers are the primary source of diseases because of additional materials such as fluids, meat, and blood are taken from most patients, and if not properly managed, they contribute to the spread of diseases.

According to Ayubi, those working in health centers must manage medical waste based on guidelines of the World Health

Organization and the Environmental Protection Agency.

He added: "Controlling and disposing of medical waste is costly, which is beyond the capability of the private sector, and the incinerators in public hospitals are non-functional. However, one person has been appointed with a vehicle to collect medical waste from health centers and burn it outside the city, which has helped prevent the spread of medical waste to some extent."

Fawad Masoomi, another doctor in Maimana, says that before the initiative of the Environmental Protection Directorate and the assigned committee, most health centers would throw their medical waste in rivers and drains. However, after one person

with a vehicle was appointed to collect the waste, medical waste has been controlled.

He added that controlling medical waste is extremely important and failing to do so results in the spread of diseases and poses life-threatening risks to the people and even the health personnel.

Qari Mohammad Ismail Ayubi, head of Faryab's Environmental Protection Agency, says that a committee consisting of representatives from six environmental organizations, provincial authorities, the Ministry of Public Health, the municipality, agriculture, and the private sector has been formed to control, collect, and dispose of medical waste, and approximately 70 percent of the waste dumping on roads

and in rivers has been prevented.

Ayubi added: "Most health centers were not aware of the risks of medical waste, the spread of diseases, and how to collect, transfer, and dispose of it. They had not followed proper management procedures and disposed of it in rivers, streets, or municipal trash bins. After several meetings, the private sector was required to appoint someone with a vehicle to collect, transfer, and dispose of the waste, which has been 60 to 70 percent effective."

He explained that medical waste includes sharp and hazardous objects, containing infectious, carcinogenic, chemical, toxic, and dangerous substances. It is produced in health centers, blood banks, laboratories,

outpatient clinics, research centers, and diagnostic facilities. Improper management of this waste creates environmental problems and affects human health.

Regarding the disposal of medical waste in government hospitals, he said: "In Maimana hospital, two incinerators that dispose of waste were non-functional. After discussions with the relevant authorities, one of the incinerators has been activated and is now burning the produced waste daily. However, parts for the other incinerator were not found, so it remains inactive."

He added that several health centers that did not follow the guidelines and disposed of waste in streets or municipal trash bins have been shut down.

He added that the appointed committee monitors health centers once a week, and if the guidelines are not followed and the centers do not have an environmental license, legal action will be taken against them.

Dr. Parwiz Hamidi, the environmental health officer at the Faryab Public Health Department, says that medical waste pollutes the environment and poses risks to humans and even animals. He said that in the past, medical waste could be seen anywhere in the city and among municipal trash bins.

However, since the private sector appointed a person with a vehicle to collect medical waste, it is now collected from health centers and clinics and burned outside the city.

Russia gave asylum to deposed Syrian President al-Assad, Kremlin confirms

MOSCOW: Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has confirmed that removed Syrian President Bashar al-Assad was given asylum in Russia as he fled a lightning advance by opposition forces, saying the decision was made personally by President Vladimir Putin.

“Of course, such decisions cannot be made without the head of state. It is his [Putin’s] decision,” Peskov told reporters in Moscow on Monday. However, he declined to comment on al-Assad’s specific whereabouts and said Putin was not planning to meet with him. “The Russian authorities have granted political asylum,” said Al Jazeera’s Yulia Shapovalova, reporting from Moscow. “We see reports on our end that Russia has not abandoned the resigned Syrian president in such difficult circumstances. Al-Assad was allegedly evacuated by a Russian plane from the Russian airbase in Latakia.”

Shapovalova said it remained to be seen how the decision to grant the former leader asylum would affect Russia and its assets in Syria. “The most important question is the fate of Russian military bases,” namely a naval base in Tartous and an airbase in Hmeimim, Latakia, Shapovalova said. Our reporter added that the Kremlin was taking precautions to ensure its personnel’s safety but that incoming reports from Tartous suggested no imminent threat.

The Kremlin said it was premature to say what the future would hold for Russia’s military bases in Syria. “This is all a subject for discussion with those who will be in power in Syria,” Peskov said. The Tartous facility is Russia’s only Mediterranean repair and replenishment hub, and Moscow has used Syria as a staging post to fly its military contractors in and out of countries in Africa.

Speaking about the broader regional and international situation, the Kremlin spokesman added that he saw a turbulent time ahead with a high potential for conflict. “We see

the situation around Ukraine, we see many contradictory statements in this regard, we see a growing conflict potential in other regions, we can say the burning Middle East,” he said. The lightning advance of an opposition alliance spearheaded by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), a former al-Qaeda affiliate, surprised the world on Sunday and Russia was no exception.

HTS is still designated as a terrorist group by the United Nations and most countries, but has spent years trying to soften its image and distance itself from its al-Qaeda roots to reassure foreign states and minority groups within Syria. Peskov said Moscow was in contact with Ankara and other regional players on the situation in Syria and that Russia was ready for dialogue with all countries of the region in the face of the instability that lies ahead.

Russia, Turkiye and Iran have regularly held talks on Syria’s future in a trilateral format as part of what is known as the Astana peace process. Al-Assad’s fall destroyed one of the main bastions from which Iran and Russia wielded power across the region. Turkiye, long aligned with al-Assad’s foes, emerged strengthened, while Israel hailed it as an outcome of its blows to al-Assad’s Iranian-backed allies.

On Monday the Israeli military published photos of its forces in the Mount Hermon border area. It said it was carrying out air attacks on suspected chemical weapons sites and long-range rockets to keep them from falling into the hands of the opposition fighters. Israel struck sites linked to Iran in Syria on Sunday and pushed tanks over the border into a demilitarised buffer zone to prevent a spillover from the turmoil there, but said it intended to stay out of the conflict.

Meanwhile, Youssef Salah and Mohammad Mahmoud exchanged joyful cheek kisses from their motorbikes in Cola Roundabout, a busy transport hub in Beirut. “Today is the

best morning,” the smiling Mahmoud, 20, said. “We feel the biggest joy,” he gestured at Ali al-Abed, 20, who was seated behind him. “We’re from Deir Az Zor,” al-Abed said, adding: “Free Deir Az Zor, write it down like that!”

A man from south Lebanon buying breakfast from a kaak (a type of Arabic bread) vendor shouted over: “Who will rule you now? The Americans, the Israelis?” “I don’t know, but it’s been 13 years,” Mahmoud shouted back. “Khalas [enough]!” The three young men were beaming the morning after the end of the al-Assad dynasty’s rule in Syria after 53 years. A lightning offensive by Syrian opposition groups that freed people in regime prisons and took big cities – Aleppo, Hama, Homs and finally Damascus – took just more than a week.

Hafez al-Assad came to power in 1971, and his son Bashar succeeded him in 2000, after Hafez’s death. Syrians rose against the regime in 2011 but faced a brutal crackdown that devolved into a war involving regional and international actors. As of the end of November, more than five million Syrians were refugees around the region and millions more were internally displaced. Syrians who had to flee their homeland to escape the violence spoke to Al Jazeera about the tumultuous feelings they woke up to on Sunday.

Most around the region welcomed the end of the al-Assad dynasty. “One heart isn’t enough to hold this great joy,” Yehya Jumaa, a Homsí in Jordan, told Al Jazeera. “We need 10 hearts to bear this joy.” Yet, the regime has fallen, but the echoes of its brutality live on through the damage it has done to many of its people. Mohammad, 33, a Homsí in Chitoura, Lebanon, said three of his relatives were released from prison on Sunday, but others were still missing. However, Mohammad said, the veil of fear of speaking the truth had lifted. — Aljazeera



PESHAWAR: Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur giving away shield to Adviser on Information, Barrister Saif during a ceremony.

ATC grants physical remand for 19 accused

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) has granted a 3-day physical remand for 19 individuals arrested in connection with the D-Chowk protest in Islamabad.

The accused were presented before Judge Abul Hasanat Zulqarnain, where the court rejected a police request for a 20-day remand. Prosecutor Raja Naveed argued that the accused had provided valuable information leading to further arrests, and that additional recoveries were expected. He requested an extended remand to facilitate ongoing investigations. However, the court approved only a 3-day remand, bringing the total physical remand period to 11 days for the accused, during which several key revelations had been made.

In a separate development, the ATC had earlier dismissed a similar request for further remand of 17 protesters arrested at D-Chowk. Prosecutor Atif Ranjha had sought a 22-day physical remand for the accused, but their lawyer, Ansar Kayani, opposed the request. After hearing both sides, the court ordered the protesters to be sent to jail on judicial remand, rejecting the prosecutor’s request.

In another case, the ATC had earlier handed over 146 individuals arrested during the same protest to the police on a five-day physical remand. The police had initially sought a 20-day remand for the group. Prosecutor Raja Naveed stated that a five-day remand had already been granted, and several seizures had been made. The court also approved a further five-day remand for these accused, as investigations continue. The cases are part of ongoing legal proceedings following the protests in Islamabad, where authorities have intensified efforts to investigate and gather evidence linked to the unrest at D-Chowk.

JI announces million march

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) has announced a million march in Islamabad on December 29 to protest against the economic and political conditions in Pakistan.

Addressing a press conference, Hafiz Naeem-ur-Rehman, the Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami, expressed concerns over the dire state of the nation’s economy and the political system. Rehman compared Pakistan’s situation to that of Syria, highlighting how the Syrian government, under Bashar al-Assad, suppressed the people and denied them their rights.

He pointed out that in Pakistan, a few influential individuals control the country’s resources, leading to economic inequality. He criticized the current rise in the stock market, labeling it as a “fake rally,” with big players manipulating the market by directing investments into the stock exchange and benefiting from the reduction in interest rates. He emphasized that this practice has been seen before, contributing to a distortion of the economy.

Self-accountability must for eradicating graft: CM

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, emphasized the need for self-accountability as a prerequisite for eradicating corruption from society. Speaking as the chief guest at a seminar organized by the Information and Public Relations department and the Provincial Anti-Corruption Establishment at Nishtar Hall, Peshawar on Monday, The Chief Minister highlighted that corruption could only be eliminated when society collectively begins to view it as a serious moral evil.

He termed corruption as social menace, and said that “The day we start seeing corruption as a grave issue, its eradication will begin,” he remarked and stressed the need for implementation of anti-corruption measures beyond mere rhetoric.

The Chief Minister underlined the importance of seeking blessings and peace in life over the pursuit of wealth, noting that wealth is meaningless without inner tranquility and

divine blessings. He further called for decisions in all aspects of life to align with Islamic teachings, asserting that following these principles is essential for success in both this world and the hereafter. Highlighting social shortcomings, Gandapur lamented the lack of moral standards required to overcome corruption, and stated that despite having resources and wealth, we are deprived of peace and contentment. He criticized institutions responsible for curbing corruption for failing to fulfill their duties and, in some cases, becoming promoters of corruption themselves.

He expressed regret that anti-corruption bodies at the national level are often misused for political victimization, making the fight against corruption even more challenging. “It is unfortunate that as a society, we remain mentally enslaved and lack intellectual independence.

If we aspire for progress, we must free ourselves from this mindset,” he added. Ali Amin Gandapur urged individuals to priori-

tize the upbringing and education of their children over amassing wealth through illicit means. He noted that children raised on ill-gotten wealth often fail to respect their parents or uphold family honor.

The seminar also featured speeches by Provincial Cabinet Members Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif, Brigadier (R) Musaddiq Abbasi, and Chief Secretary Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry. The speakers discussed the negative impact of corruption on society, measures for its prevention, and highlighted various related issues.

The event was attended by Provincial Ministers Arshad Ayub Khan, Meena Khan Afridi, and Syed Qasim Ali Shah, along with the Inspector General of Police, administrative secretaries of provincial departments, government officials, media representatives, and a large number of students. The seminar concluded with an awareness walk against corruption, led by Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur.

Fazl urges govt to avoid politicising seminaries’ issue

F.P. Report

CHARSADDA: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman on Monday asked the government to avoid politicising the issue of seminaries.

Speaking at a press conference, he asserted that the struggle for the autonomy of seminaries was a collective cause for all scholars and religious institutions. He stressed the importance of safeguarding religious education, including Quranic studies, Fiqh, and Hadith, while condemning attempts to create divisions among scholars.

Rehman accused institutions of interfering in the Madrasa Registration Bill, which had previously been passed with consensus. He highlighted that seminaries were given the freedom to affiliate under the 1860 Act or the Ministry of Education. He reiterated his

commitment to safeguarding the independence of seminaries while advocating their registration in a fair manner.

Ulema and Mashaikh held an important meeting regarding the registration and reforms in seminaries in Islamabad on Monday.

Addressing the participants, Director General of Religious Education Ghulam Qamar said it was a consensus decision that the seminaries of all schools of thought would register themselves with the directorate general of religious education. Recognising the role of seminaries in education of children of poor segments of society, the director general said 18,600 seminaries had got themselves registered. He said “we are also providing teachers to the seminaries. “We provided technical training to 2,500 students of seminaries,” he said.

In current circumstances, he said, they were not willing to accept any proposal tabled by the government. Fazl asked the government to focus on the country’s security situation amid rising terror attacks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. “Focus on the country, we are here to save madrasahs,” he added.

Furthermore, the JUI-F chief claimed that armed groups were present in both restive provinces — KP and Balochistan — during the February 8 general elections. “In both provinces, religious and nationalist parties were kept out of the assemblies. He also accused the authorities of pushing the seminaries towards extremism, alleging that they want to control the religious seminaries on orders of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the United States and the West.

Israel strikes flour distribution line, kills 50 across Gaza

GAZA: Dozens of Palestinians — including women and children — have been killed in Israeli attacks in Gaza, health authorities say, as a power outage threatens the lives of more than 100 patients at a hospital in the besieged territory’s north. Gaza’s Health Ministry said on Monday that 50 people were killed the previous day and 84 others were injured as Israeli forces committed three “massacres” in the territory.

An Israeli drone attack in the Jabalia refugee camp in northern Gaza on Monday morning killed three people, sources told Al Jazeera. “[The victims] were trying to leave their home in search of food in the vicinity of their neighbourhood when they were targeted by a drone,” said Al Jazeera’s Hani Mahmoud, reporting from central Deir el-Balah in

Gaza. “They were killed right away. Their bodies are still in the street and nobody has the ability to get to the bombed site and remove the bodies from the street.”

Jabalia has been under Israeli siege for 65 days, with thousands of Palestinians being denied access to food and water supplies, leaving many starving. “Jabalia has been turned into a graveyard,” Mahmoud said. Overnight, an Israeli attack in the southern city of Rafah also killed 10 people while they had lined up to buy flour. Mahmoud said because of the limited delivery of humanitarian aid going through the southern border, scenes of hunger similar to northern Gaza were also happening in the south.

In central Gaza, where our correspondent is reporting from outside Al-Aqsa Hospital, bodies were also

piling up at the medical facility’s morgue following the latest Israeli bombing of a residential building in the Bureij refugee camp. At least nine members of one family, most of them women and children, were killed in the attack, Mahmoud said. “The agony keeps on unfolding here at Al-Aqsa Hospital, where survivors and relatives showed up early this morning to collect the bodies from the morgue of the hospital,” he said. “At some point, the morgue of the hospital was packed with the bodies and there was not enough room for more bodies.”

Meanwhile, in northern Gaza’s Kamal Adwan Hospital, the head of the facility, Hussam Abu Safia, said the lives of more than 100 patients were in danger after electricity, oxygen and water supplies were cut. — Aljazeera

PHC grants transit bail to Omar Ayub

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Two separate benches of Peshawar High Court (PHC) granted protective bail to five Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders including Opposition Leader Umar Ayub, for a period of one month and three weeks respectively, on Monday.

PHC Chief Justice Ishfaq Ibrahim heard the bail petition filed by Umar Ayub. During the hearing, the counsel Alam Khan Adeenzai advocate informed the court that a case had been registered against Umar Ayub in Faisalabad, while seven other cases were registered against him in Islamabad and other districts of Punjab.

The lawyer requested the court to grant protective bail to Umar Ayub, enabling him to appear before the relevant courts. The court, after hearing the arguments, granted one-month protective bail to Umar Ayub and directed him to appear before the relevant courts within the stipulated time.

Similarly, another bench of the Peshawar High Court, comprising Chief Justice Sahibzada Asadullah heard the petitions filed by PTI lawmakers, including Shandana Gulzar, Arbab Sher Ali, Arbab Aamir Ayub, and Asif Khan.

During the hearing, the petitioners’ lawyer, Moazzam Butt and Alam Khan advocates informed the court that Arbab Sher Ali was abroad on the day the case was registered against him.

Arrest warrants of cops issued

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) Peshawar has issued non-bailable arrest warrants for prosecution witnesses who failed to appear before the court despite repeated summons. The court has also ordered the attachment of salaries of police officials who failed to comply with court orders, on Monday.

The ATC, while hearing a case against Muhammad Ayub and others, was informed that the prosecution witnesses, including SHO Abdul Ali, SHO Imran u Din, IO Javed, ASI Ala u Din, Shakir, Dilawar and Muhammad Jawad did not appear before the court to record their statements.

ATC annoyed non-appearance of the prosecution witnesses and issued non-bailable arrest warrants against them. The court also ordered the attachment of their salaries who failed to comply with court orders.

Tarar for solution of seminaries registration issue

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar said on Monday that extensive consultations were being done to find out a solution to seminaries registration issue, acceptable to all stakeholders.

Delivering speech at Conference on Madrasa Registration and Reforms, he said that input of Ulama and Mashaikh regarding the registration and Madrasa reforms was important. The minister said a few years back, a system was devised after extensive consultations to bring religious seminaries into the mainstream. Tarar said that the objective of that legislation was to bring seminaries into national mainstream, besides eradicating some negative perceptions in this regard.

The most important aspect of that system was to ensure that the students graduated from seminaries

do not face any discrimination and get equal opportunities, he added. "Registration of 18,000 Madrasahs is the result of the efforts of the Department of Religious Education", he said adding that efforts of the Director General of Religious Education were worth appreciation. He also thanked the role of Ulema and Mashaikh for their cooperation in this regard.

About the Madrasa Bill, he said it could not become law due to some legal complications. He said the suggestions given by the scholars had been noted, and a final solution would be found after thorough consultations. Registration of religious seminaries done by the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training had started bearing fruits, the minister noted. He said it was praise worthy that students graduated from religious seminaries were making their mark in higher education fields.

Students of seminaries have been given a chance to advance in life by providing them equal opportunities, he added. He said positive consultations will be held on the suggestions of religious scholars in this conference. He said that the government had no objection over several proposals given by the religious scholars today and it was good that all schools of thought in Pakistan were represented here.

About Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam Amir Maulana Fazlur Rehman, the minister said he was a respectable leader and his suggestions will be given due importance and a solution would eventually be found. "We also have to play our role in matters related to law and order in the country.Countering terrorism and creating awareness about it is very important," he added. He stated that a separate meeting would be held in this regard soon. At the end, the minister recited a poem of Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan.

Pak Navy celebrates 53rd Hangor Day



F.P. Report

LAHORE: Pakistan Navy celebrated 53rd HANGOR Day to commemorate the historic event in which Pakistan Navy Submarine HANGOR sank Indian Navy Frigate KHUKRI and crippled INS KIRPAN during the 1971 war in a spectacular display of naval warfare. To pay special tribute, Pakistan Navy observes 9th December as HANGOR Day, a reminder of the unmatched courage and unwavering commitment demonstrated by Submarine HANGOR during the war.

This year, an impressive ceremony was held at Pakistan Navy War College, Lahore. Former Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Abdul Aziz Mirza (Retd) graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. Submarine HANGOR remains a symbol of pride for Pakistan Navy. Her gallant action during 1971 war was not only a

remarkable tactical achievement that resulted in the sinking of Indian Navy's Frigate but also effectively thwarted and marginalized Indian aggression, particularly on the Western front. The event holds a distinguished place in naval history as the first and only successful kill by a conventional submarine since World War II.

On the occasion, Vice Admiral Ahmed Tasnim (Retd), who served as the Commanding Officer of Submarine HANGOR during the operation, paid rich tribute to the valiant crew for their service in defending the motherland. He highlighted that HANGOR is a luminous chapter in Pakistan Navy's history and will always be remembered. He also elaborated on the factors that contributed to the development of extraordinary leadership skills among all ranks and emphasized their significance in

leading the nation during times of adversity.

Pakistan Navy Submarine HANGOR was the first of the Daphne Class submarines acquired from France. Commissioned in 1969, it served Pakistan Navy with honour until its decommissioning in 2006. In recognition of their bravery, the valiant crew of HANGOR was awarded four Sitara-e-Jurat, six Tamgha-e-Jurat, and sixteen Intiazi Asnaad. To honour its legacy, the submarines being jointly manufactured by Pakistan and China have been named HANGOR Class submarines.

The ceremony was attended by a large number of serving and retired PN officers, CPOs/Sailors, Navy civilians, MARSEW participants, faculty members from various public and private universities, and students from Bahria College, Lahore.