

Arrest warrants issued
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: An anti-terrorism court has issued arrest warrants for KP Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, Bushra Bibi, MNA Shahid Khattak and MPA Sohail Afridi. The warrants were issued in connection with a case registered at Ramna Police Station, following a request by the police. ATC Judge Tahir Abbas Sipra approved the police plea and directed the issuance of the warrants.



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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif addressing a ceremony to mark International Rights Day.

Cabinet gives nod to eight IPPs settlement agreements

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Cabinet in its meeting, with Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in the chair, on Tuesday approved settlement agreements with eight independent power plants (IPPs) running on bagasse.

The meeting granted its approval on the recommendation of the Ministry of Energy and the Power Division. These power plants included DW Unit I, Unit II, RYK Mills, Chiniot Power, Hamza Sugar, Al-Moez Industries, Thal Industries and Chinar Industries. After the approval of these agreements, the Central Power Purchasing Agency would contact NEPRA regarding a reduction in the power tariffs produced by these power plants.

As a result of these agreements, electricity prices for the general public would decrease and the national exchequer would benefit by Rs 238 billion, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. Addressing the meeting, the prime minister said the government was taking all possible steps to reduce electricity prices for the common man. He emphasized that the national interests should always be prioritized in every decision and action and also mentioned that the promotion of the private sector and industries in the country was a key priority for the government.

The Federal Cabinet was also briefed on the latest situation in Syria and the evacuation of Pakistanis from there. The Cabinet was informed that out of 250 Pakistani pilgrims in Syria, 79 had

reached Beirut, from where they would be brought back to Pakistan. Additionally, out of 20 teachers and students in Syria, seven teachers had also reached Beirut.

The meeting was further informed that the officials of the Pakistani embassies in Syria and Lebanon were taking all possible measures to ensure the safe return of Pakistanis from Syria. The Federal Cabinet approved the appointment of Brigadier Asim Bashir Warraich as Member of Production Control on the Board of Heavy Industries Taxila, on the recommendation of the Ministry of Defence Production. The Federal Cabinet also sanctioned the establishment of National Commission for the Status of Women Fund, on the recommendation of the Ministry of Human Rights.

No rifts in PTI, says Saif

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Information and Public Relations, Barrister Dr. Saif, has responded to Atta Tarar's statement, saying that the ministers and entire leadership of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are just a gesture away from Imran Khan's orders.

Dr. Saif advised Atta Tarar not to attempt futile tactics and instead explain why the bullet was fired? He said the entire nation is asking the illegitimate government this question. News of rift within the PTI may be Atta Tarar's wish, but not reality. Everyone is united for Imran Khan's release and on one platform.

Dr. Saif added that under the leadership of Ali Amin Gandapur, the movement for Imran Khan's release will reach its logical conclusion. The real culprit is the Muslim League (N), which is firing straight bullets at its own people. An answer must be given for the killing of innocent workers in the D-Chowk incident and Model Town.

FO flays Israeli attacks against Syria

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Tuesday condemned in the strongest possible terms, Israeli aggression against Syria and its illegal seizure of the Syrian territory.

In a statement, Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said the Israeli assault on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria was a grave breach of international law. She said Israel's provocative actions were a dangerous development in an already volatile region. She said Israel had continued to blatantly defy international law and violate UN Security Council Resolutions. The Spokesperson said that Pakistan had expressed full support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria and rejected Israeli acquisition of territory by force.

Plan for return of Pakistanis from Syria finalized

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday said that the government has finalised a mechanism to ensure the safe return of Pakistani nationals stranded in Syria, in coordination with the Lebanese government.

The prime minister, addressing the meeting of the federal cabinet he chaired, said that 250 Pakistani pilgrims were stranded in Syria where the situation was charged altogether within a few days and Pakistan took a neutral position. Besides, another 300 Pakistani nationals, including teachers and students, living in Syria also expressed their desire to leave the country. He said that Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and the foreign ministry were in contact with Pakistan's ambassador in Damascus to ensure the safe return of the Pakistani nationals.

He told the meeting that he held a telephone conversation with Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati on Monday, during which the latter expressed his willingness to allow the return of Pakistani nationals through a chartered flight from Beirut Airport and also expressed his gratitude to the government and people

79 Pakistani pilgrims evacuated to Beirut

BEIRUT (AFP): Seventy-nine Pakistani pilgrims have been evacuated to Beirut while the Syrian rebels now in power have appointed Mohammed al-Bashir as head of a transitional government that will be in place until March 1, state media said on Tuesday, a day after talks began on the transfer of power following ex-president Bashar al-Assad's ouster.

In a brief address on state television, Bashir, a figure little known across most of Syria who previously ran an administration in a small pocket of the northwest controlled by rebels, said he would lead the interim authority until March 1. "Today we held a cabinet meeting that included a team from the Salvation Government that was working in Idlib and its vicinity, and the government of the ousted regime," he said. "The meeting was under the headline of transferring the files and institutions to caretake the government." Behind him were two flags: the green, black and white flag flown by opponents of Assad throughout the civil war, and a white flag with the Islamic oath of faith in black writing, typically flown in Syria by Sunni fighters.

of Pakistan for their support during the crisis caused by Israeli aggression. Regarding the economic situation, Prime Minister Shehbaz expressed satisfaction that inflation had declined further to 3.57% and that foreign remittances had increased record high comparing last year.

He told the cabinet members that in their Monday meeting, the Ambassador of Azerbaijan in Islamabad emphasized the finalisation of feasibility and other formalities for Azerbaijan's \$2 billion investment projects in Pakistan to enable the signing of agreements during the prime minister's visit to Baku in February next year.

Kh Asif accuses PTI of playing Pashtun card

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif on Tuesday stated that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf was resorting to Pashtun card for their vested political interests.

Addressing the National Assembly session, the minister lambasted the PTI leaders for pushing forward false figures regarding the reported deaths of PTI supporters during Nov 26 protest. "Where is the family of the deceased,?" He questioned.

He also claimed that there were severe rifts within the PTI as everyone was giving his own narrative. He said what he had contemplated from the speech

of Omar Ayub was that when the PTI leaders fled from the protest, Bushra Bibi was also with them. Asif said it was now on record that Ali Amin Gandapur also ran away from the protest. The footage, the PML-N leader remarked, clearly showed that he fled the site and the party supporters attacked his car afterwards. The PML-N leader also added that Gandapur's own guard opened fire at the PTI supporters to disperse them. He said after Ayub Khan, his relatives were playing the provincialism card.

Meanwhile, the House Business Advisory Committee of the National Assembly on Tuesday agreed to continue the current 11th session till December 20. The committee which met with Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq in the Chair, discussed the agenda and duration of the 11th session of the National Assembly, said a press release. During the meeting, fateha was offered for the departed soul of the Speaker's sister.

It was also agreed to discuss legislation, question hour, adjournment motions, and other important public issues in the current session. The meeting was attended by Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Syed Mir Ghulam Mustafa Shah, Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tara and others also attended the meeting.

Jawan martyred, 15 militants killed

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Security forces conducted an intelligence based operation in general area Sambaza, Zhob District. During the conduct of operation, own troops effectively engaged the khwarji location and resultantly 15 x Khawarij were sent to hell.

A large quantity of weapons, ammunition and explosives were also recovered from the killed Khawarij. However, during intense exchange of fire, Sep Arif ur Rehman (age 32 years; resident of Mansehra District), having fought gallantly, paid the ultimate sacrifice and embraced Shahadat. Sanitization operation is being conducted to neutralize any other Kharji present in the area. Security forces of Pakistan, in step with the nation, remain determined to wipe out the menace of terrorism from the country and sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve.

President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday lauded the security forces for their successful operation against Khawarij in Zhob district.

In separate statements, the president and the prime minister paid tribute to security forces for successful operation against Fina al-Khawarij in Zhob district. They praised the bravery of the forces for killing 15 terrorists during the successful operation and also paid tribute to Sepoy Arif-ur-Rehman Shaheed, who sacrificed his life while thwarting terrorists during the operation.

They also prayed for the highest ranks for Sepoy Arif-ur-Rehman Shaheed in the hereafter, and for the family to have patience for his irreparable loss. They expressed their determination to continue operations until the complete eradication of the scourge of terrorism. The president and the prime minister said, "The entire nation is with the security forces in the war against terrorism."

Omar hints at starting civil disobedience movement

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader and Opposition Leader in the National Assembly Omar Ayub hinted at proceeding ahead with party founder Imran Khan's call for starting a movement of civil disobedience if the government didn't meet the demands put forward by the imprisoned former premier.

Speaking to media in Peshawar, Ayub said Pakistan was under the siege. He said unarmed people of Pakistan were not safe from the wrath of the state.

"The negotiations committee of the PTI will try to persuade the government to redress our matters, otherwise we will start a civil disobedience movement," he added. Earlier, Senator Faisal Vawda alleged that the PTI's call for civil disobedience was a strategy to pressurise proceedings against former spymaster Faiz Hameed.

Vawda met MQM leaders during a visit to the party's central office in Bahadurabad, Karachi on Sunday. He also criticised the alleged mismanagement by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief minister, declaring that lawlessness would not be tolerated.

Vawda claimed that the PTI's civil disobedience call was timed to coincide with Faiz Hameed's case proceedings but noted that the hearing might begin earlier. He urged the PTI to reform its approach and protect its founder, emphasising that his most genuine supporters are his sisters.

Ex-ISI DG Faiz Hameed arraigned

Violations of Official Secret Act, engaging in political activities

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Process of FGCM was initiated against Lt Gen Faiz Hamid (Retd) under provisions of Pakistan Army Act and in first place Lt Gen Faiz Hameed (Retd) has been formally arraigned on charges of engaging in political activities, violations of Official Secret Act detrimental to safety and interest of the state, misuse of authority & government resources and causing wrongful loss to a person(s).

During the process, involvement of Lt Gen Faiz Hamid (Retd), in events related to creating agitation and unrest, leading upto multiple incidents including but not limited to 9th May 2023 incident for fomenting instability; at the behest of and in collusion with vested political interests, is also being separately investigated. Lt Gen Faiz Hamid (Retd) is being afforded with all legal rights as per the law.

In April last, the Pakistan Army constituted a high-level committee, headed by a major general, to probe the allegations that Hameed had misused his authority. The allegations were levelled by the owner of the Top City housing society in a petition filed by him in the Supreme Court of Pakistan in November 2023.

The petitioner had alleged that his Top City office and house were raided at the behest of Faiz Hameed on May 12, 2017 and valuables including gold, diamonds and cash were seized from his house by the officials. A court in Rawalpindi in March 2024 sent retired naib tehsildar Najaf Hameed, brother of Hameed, to Adiala Jail on a 14-day judicial remand.

Najaf, along with co-accused persons, sought pre-arrest bail in the case registered with the Anti-Corruption Esta-b-l-i-shment (ACE) in Rawalpindi. The FIR alleged that former minister for mineral resources Hafiz Ammar Yasir



acquired properties worth billions of rupees in the name of benamidars. The apex court also ordered proper investigation to ascertain charges against Faiz Hameed.

The former ISI head has also been charged with participation in political activities and abuse of power on various occasions. His named also figured in the infamous Faizabad dharna when PML-N was in power.

An inquiry commission probing the November 2017 Faizabad sit-in absolved former director general of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), retired Lt Gen Faiz Hameed, of the charges. The three-member commission, set up on the order of the Supreme Court, issued its 149-page report.

According to sources, the commission cited various loopholes in the handling of the issue and drafted recommendations after evaluating the circumstances related to the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan's sit-in at Faizabad. The report highlighted the role of the Islamabad police, the Ministry of Interior, the Punjab government, the ISI and the IB, and contained details of matters related to former law minister Zahid Hamid.

COAS commends Army team to secure gold medal

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS), met with the Pakistan Army team that secured the prestigious Gold Medal in the "Exercise Cambrian Patrol" held in the United Kingdom from 4 to 13 October 2024.

The Cambrian Patrol, recognized as one of the most challenging military exercises globally, witnessed participation from 143 teams. The Pakistan Army contingent demonstrated exceptional skill and resilience, marking the sixth occasion that the



Pakistan Army has clinched this coveted honor. COAS commended the team on their outstanding accomplishment for upholding the honor of Pakistan on an international platform.

The Exercise Cambrian Patrol, conducted in the unforgiving mountainous terrain of mid-Wales,

United Kingdom, is an arduous test of physical endurance, tactical acumen, and mental fortitude. It emphasizes teamwork, leadership, self-discipline, courage, and determination under the most demanding operational scenarios, serving as a benchmark for military excellence.

Individuals involved in cyber terrorism to face action: Tarar

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar on Tuesday said that stern action would be taken against elements involved in digital terrorism to harass and target journalists through social media.

"Attempts are being made to harm the children of journalists by sharing their families' details and their addresses," the minister said while addressing a press conference on Tuesday. The minister stated in categorical terms that the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting with the collaboration of the Ministry of Interior will take stern action against those involved in a campaign against the journalists.

He said that the objective of the malicious campaign was to harm journalists and their families and Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) had also strongly condemned online harassment of journalists. Threatening and targeting the journalists and their families was a highly condemnable act and not a single culprit would be spared, the minister assured.

Castigating the PTI leadership, he said that they ran away from D Chowk leaving their party workers. He said that the question arises as to why the PTI leaders escaped from the Blue Area. Attaullah Tarar said that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government and some of its ministers had opposed the call for civil disobedience and this was a step worth appreciation. "For the first time someone in the PTI has preferred national interest over the party and personal interest," he said.

He said that the PTI leadership had sown the seeds of hatred and disunity in the nation and now they were reaping the same harvest as the PTI was facing infighting and disharmony among its ranks. Blasting the PTI, he said that the group has called for boycotting Pakistani products as they were propagating and projecting foreign agenda against the national institutions. Taking a dig at the PTI, he said they call for the boycott of Pakistani products but they open their mouths on the genocide of Palestinians. Elaborating further, he said that when all-parties conference was held on the Palestine issue, the PTI did not attend as

they could not condemn the Israeli aggression.

He opined that the Goldsmith family had directed the PTI not to take part in any campaign in favour of Palestine. "The PTI is pursuing a foreign agenda against Pakistan and its forces. Those creating a rift between the army and the people want to weaken the country", he added. He said it was a known principle if the army of a country was strong, the country was strong but if the army was weak, the country was weak.

He said the entire world acknowledged that the Pakistani Army was a most efficient and professional entity. The minister was of the opinion that the PTI wanted to weaken the army so that inimical forces could take advantage. "The whole world knows about 'Operation Goldsmith'", he said adding that late Hakeem Saeed and Dr Israr Ahmed had rightly predicted the agenda of the founder of the PTI. "They want chaos in the country and on May 9 and November 26, they wanted to spread anarchy in the country but they could not escape punishment", the minister remarked.



India committing severe human rights violations in Kashmir: Mashal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Wife of Hurriyat leader Yasin Malik and Chairperson Peace and Culture Organization Mashal Malik on the occasion of International Human Rights Day on Tuesday condemned India for committing severe human rights violations in Kashmir.

In an interview with PTV, she described Indian-occupied Kashmir as the

world's largest human prison, where Kashmiri leaders were detained solely for demanding the right to self-determination. Most of the Hurriyat leaders were detained in various notorious prisons in the different parts of India, she added. In addition to that, Ahmed Qasim, son of Hurriyat leader Asiya Andrabi, highlighted that his mother has been impris-

oned since 2018. He noted that this situation is a harsh reality for many Kashmiris seeking freedom. He further said that over one million Indian troops stationed in the region continue to perpetrate violence and atrocities against unarmed civilians. He urged global attention and intervention on the blatant human rights violation in IIOK.

Sindh Newspapers Society hosts vibrant Sindhi culture day celebration

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Sindh Newspapers Society (SNS) marked Sindhi Culture Day with a grand celebration at Indus Public School, Gagar, blending tradition and festivity in a tribute to Sindh's rich cultural heritage. The event drew an enthusiastic audience, including SNS officials—President Qazi Shafiq Ahmed, General Secretary Shahzad Rizwan, Naseem Sheikh, and Governing Body Members Didar Sandeelo and Syed Iqbal Hussain—as well as prominent local dignitaries and community leaders. Notable attendees included General Secretary Malir District Ramdad Ali Jokhio, Chairman Gulshan Hadeed Rao Safdar Hayat, Vice Chairman Gulshan Hadeed Mir Abbas Talpur,

Chairman UC Ghaggar Ghulam Akbar Kalmati, Vice Chairman UC Ghaggar Abdul Sattar Jokhio, and other leaders such as Agha Muhammad Tariq, Muhammad Urs Khedro, and Advocate Raza Ali Sandeelo. The gathering also featured figures like Dost Muhammad Malik, Muhammad Ilyas Malik, Ghulam Hussain Sandeelo, Zohaib Hussain Zardari, Arbab Asghar, Ijaz Sandeelo, and Qazi Jamil Ahmed, all united in their appreciation of Sindh's enduring legacy. The highlight of the program was an extraordinary tableau performed by the school's children. Through music, drama, and dance, the performance eloquently captured the essence of Sindhi culture, leaving the audience captivated and earning

widespread acclaim. Participants were presented with Sindhi Ajrak, a timeless symbol of unity, respect, and cultural pride, reinforcing the significance of Sindh's heritage and the shared commitment to its preservation. Addressing the attendees, SNS representatives emphasized the critical role of such celebrations in fostering cultural awareness and instilling pride among younger generations. They commended the Indus Public School for its dedication and effort in organizing an event that so effectively celebrated Sindhi traditions. The event concluded with a collective pledge to safeguard and promote Sindh's vibrant cultural identity, ensuring its legacy continues to inspire and resonate across generations.

FBR addresses misunderstandings over baggage value limit

F.P. Report

KARACHI: FBR issued draft SRO 2028(I)/2024 dated 06.12.2024 proposing certain amendments in its notification No. SRO 666(I)/2006 dated 28.06.2006 pertaining to Baggage Rules, which has created a wrong impression that the value of personal baggage has been fixed up to USD1200 and this confusion has been circulating in the press and other media in the country. It is hereby clarified that

in the draft Notification, the term "commercial quantity" defined in Baggage Rules, 2006 was elaborated to fix a limit of USD1200 for goods brought in baggage prima facie for trading or pecuniary gain. The purpose of the draft amendment is to curb the misuse of the baggage facility by commercial carriers. However, as explicitly mentioned in the notification the limit of USD 1200 does not include the items for "personal use or gift" by a passenger.

Therefore, it is clarified that the limit of USD 1200 mentioned in the draft Notification does not apply to items of personal use and bona fide baggage items. The impression that Customs shall confiscate personal baggage valuing more than USD1200 is strongly rebutted. As the draft Notification has been widely misinterpreted in the public particularly in the social media, therefore to avoid spread of further confusion the draft Notification has been withdrawn.

Arora meets Belarus ambassador Andrei Metelitsa

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Minister for Minorities Ramesh Singh Arora met with the Ambassador of Belarus in Pakistan, Andrei Metelitsa, in Islamabad to discuss areas of mutual interest and collaboration. The meeting, which took place at the Embassy of Belarus, focused on strengthening ties between the two nations and exploring opportunities for enhanced cooperation. During the meeting, Ramesh Singh Arora highlighted the ongoing efforts by the Punjab government to protect the rights of religious minorities. He emphasized the government's commitment to

fostering an inclusive environment where people from all religious communities can live with dignity and equality. Minister Arora shared details about the Punjab government's upcoming initiative, the Minority Card project, which aims to provide greater access to benefits and protections for minority communities. The project, once implemented, will ensure that minorities receive their due rights and will empower them in various aspects of public life. Ambassador Metelitsa expressed his appreciation for the initiatives taken by the Punjab government and noted Belarus's interest in learning from Pakistan's

approach to promoting interfaith harmony and safeguarding minority rights. Both officials expressed their desire to further strengthen the diplomatic and cultural ties between Pakistan and Belarus. Minister Arora and Ambassador Metelitsa also discussed ways to deepen cooperation in sectors such as education, trade, and cultural exchanges, with an emphasis on fostering mutual understanding and collaboration. The meeting concluded with both sides agreeing to continue dialogues on enhancing bilateral relations, ensuring a positive and progressive future for both nations.



KARACHI: Members of Civil Society hold pycard during protest rally outside KPC. —INP Photo

Sharjeel hosts delegation for strategic talks on Sindh's transport initiatives

F.P. Report

KARACHI: A delegation of international investors called on Sindh's Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit, Sharjeel Inam Memon, in Karachi. Various transport projects were discussed during the meeting, which was also attended by the Special Assistant to the Chief Minister on Public-Private Partnership Qasim Naveed Qamar, Secretary of Transport Asad Zamin, Managing Director of the Sindh Mass Transit Authority Kamal Hakim Dayo, and other officials.

During the meeting, Sindh's Senior Minister, Sharjeel Inam Memon, invited foreign investors to invest in the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR), Bullet Train, Bus Manufacturing Plant, Electric Vehicle (EV) Buses, and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) systems. The international investors also showed interest in developing the KCR, Bullet Train, Bus Plant, and starting an



EV Taxi Service.

The Senior Minister, Sharjeel Inam Memon, while speaking on the occasion, said that the Sindh government was also intending to start an EV Taxi Service that would provide fresh employment opportunities. He said that the government would extend all-out support to investors, which also included the establishment of charging depots for EV buses and taxis.

He also called upon the investors to invest in the Bullet Train project, elaborating that the Karachi-to-Sukkur Bullet Train or High-Speed Train was a serious project that would greatly benefit the travel of millions of people. He pointed out that the investors will have much to gain from this project, highlighting that investment in the transport sector serves the interest of the public and the investors as well.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that projects such as the Bullet Train and sustainable EV infrastructure are important for modernizing the transport sector. He underlined that KCR, which is part of CPEC, is a flagship project, and the government is eager for investors to participate in this project. Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon also apprised the investors of the benefits of Dhabaji Economic Zone

and invited them to set up a bus manufacturing plant at Dhabaji Economic Zone. He underlined that the bus manufacturing plant in the Dhabaji Economic Zone, part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), is one of the major projects.

He said the Sindh government would provide all facilities regarding the establishment of bus plant in the zone. He further said that Pakistan, particularly Sindh, has an environment very conducive to businesses in every respect.

During the meeting, the delegation of investors informed that Pakistan has a strategic position as a gateway to South Asia and Central Asia. They also discussed technical and financial cooperation on various transport projects.

The delegation of investors said the friendship between Pakistan and China had always been historic and exemplary, adding China had invested hugely in Pakistan. They said Pakistan was a big market for investment and had a huge workforce.

CM Maryam to change destiny of Punjab: Azma

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhari has said that Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz is going to change the destiny of Punjab.

In a statement issued here Tuesday, Azma Bokhari said that Maryam Nawaz is making historic agreements during her visit to China. Maryam Nawaz has signed an agreement for the latest treatment for cancer. An agreement has also

been signed to bring innovation in the agriculture sector in Punjab.

She said that Maryam Nawaz is changing the fate of the province with the help of Allah, adding the opponents are not getting out of the politics of protests, rallies and sit-ins. In a province where the party has been in power for 11 years, only Maula Jatt's serial is being aired. The provincial minister said that whenever the

country comes on track, some sedition comes out to disrupt it. Pakistan can no longer afford any sedition. Every sedition will be crushed with the help of the nation. Those who were supposed to bring about a revolution are now fighting among themselves, she added.

Azma Bokhari said that the fight between two women (Nand Bhavaj) has created five groups among the "Fitna" party.

The real work for "Suthra Punjab" begins now

LAHORE (APP): Local Government Minister Zeeshan Rafiq has said that after the launch of the Suthra Punjab program, the real work has started now. Masses' expectations had to be met in every case. He was addressing a video link meeting of CEOs of waste management companies at Civil Secretariat here on Tuesday.

Special Secretary Local Government Asia Gul was also present. The Minister congratulated the CEOs on the successful launch of Suthra Punjab program, adding that everyone worked day and night to fulfill the vision of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz. However, a lot of work was

needed to be done. He expressed the determination to remove the shortcomings within three months. "We have to develop such a system of cleanliness which could achieve the desired results", he said. Zeeshan Rafiq said that the model of sanitation in cities was slightly better, but more attention should be paid to villages where such facilities were not available before.

He figured out that there were 24 thousand villages and 4 thousand union councils in the Punjab. Local Government Minister directed that at least three loader-rickshaws and 11 officials should be provided in each

union council.

"The presence of hand-carts was necessary for the narrow streets of the villages", he pointed-out. He pledged that Punjab government will provide funds for the purchase of new handcarts.

He said that, "Currently, there were 10 thousand waste enclosures. We will make another 14 thousand for smooth functioning".

Zeeshan Rafiq said that if good cleaning services are provided by the contractors, the citizens will also cooperate happily.

He warned that action will be taken on poor performance while those, showing good performance, will be rewarded.

Matric exam date sheet revealed

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Board Committee of Chairmen has finalized the date sheet for the annual examinations of matric and ninth class across Punjab, BISE Lahore sources told APP on Tuesday.

The matric examination will begin on March 4, 2025, with the first paper of Arabic and history subjects. The final paper for matric students will be held on March 25, 2025, for the Punjabi language subject.



PAF BASE SHAHBAZ TENDER NOTICE

(a) PAF Base Shahbaz invites sealed Tenders in Pak Rupees from reputed Sales Tax - registered firms for FY 2024-25, for the following:

- Repair, Maintenance, Uplift of Sports Facilities
 - Provision of Natural Camouflaging Materials / Items
 - Provision of Conservancy Items
- (b) General Terms and Conditions, in detail, are set forth in the quotations.
- (c) Last date of submission of tender is **26 December, 2024**, at 1030 hrs, which will be opened on the same date, at 1130 hrs. Tenders received after due date and time will not be entertained and treated, as cancelled.
- (d) Officer Commanding Admin Wing PAF Base Shahbaz reserves the right to accept / reject any or all tenders on technical grounds, which will be communicated to reputed individual(s) / firm(s), on request.
- (e) For further information or query, please contact Officer Commanding Administrative Wing on telephone number 0722-670454-5030 / 0323-9439311.



PAF BASE, FAISAL TENDER NOTICE

Conservancy Items

1. Sealed tenders / quotations are invited from Sales Tax - Registered Firms / Contractors / Suppliers, for Conservancy Items (Brooms, Dustbins, Brush Mob, Wiper, Surf, Vim, Floor Polish, Liquid Bleaching Powder, Lime, Koochi, Neel, Roller, Toilet Roll, Drain Opener, Acid, Sweep, Bucket, Basket, Phenyle,, Naphthaiene Bali Toilet Cleaner etc.).

NCF Items

2. Sealed tenders / quotations are invited from Sales Tax I Registered Firms / Contractor / Suppliers, for Natural Camouflage Items (Flower Pot, Manure / Fertilizer, Bhalu Matti, Paint, Plastic Pipe Seeds, Spray and Plants of different kinds including Narial, Ficus Plam, Finex Plam, Corton, Date Pant, Stevia. Kangi Plam, Bottle Plam, Tecoma Plant, Tabobia (Yellow, Pink & White), Cadia Arjum, Pilkam, Gulmohar, Neelgum and Dhaka Grass etc).

Sports Items

3. Sealed tenders / quotations are invited from Sales Tax - Registered Firms / Contractors / Suppliers for 'Development / Maintenance of Sports Infrastructure' (Bhalu Matti / Soil for ground filling, Provision of Dhaka Grass, Provision and fixing of Mesh Wire Fence, Electric work with installation of Track / Flood Lights, Grass cuffing machine with accessories, Leveling of ground and compaction of Jogging Track, Provision of Astrotrurf grass, Paint Sports Quality, Fiber Panels, Motivational Boards, Distance Marking Boards, Kurb Stone / Payers for Tracks, Basket Bali Poles, Masking Tape / Roller.

4. General Terms and Conditions in detail are set forth in the quotations.

5. Last date of submission of tender is **26 Dec, 2024** at 1030 Hrs which will be opened on the same date at 1100 Hrs. Tender received after due date and time will not be entertained and will be treated as cancelled.

6. The Officer Commanding reserves the right of accept / reject any or all tenders on technical grounds, which will be communicated to the reputed individual(s) / firm(s) on request.

7. For further information or query, please contact Officer Commanding, Administrative Wing on Tel No. 021-99545031 / 0323-9435311.

**Officer Commanding
Administrative Wing
PAF Base, Faisal
Tel Ext 021-99545031**



OFFICE OF THE, SENIOR SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE, SHAHEED BENAZIRABAD

No. GB/Build/24621-28/2024/SBA, Dated 09-12-2024

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tenders are hereby invited from the interested contractors / companies for Maintenance & Repair of Boundary Wall of SSP Office SBA & Police Line SBA and Maintenance & Repair of Roof DIGP SBA Residence of District Shaheed Benazirabad under SPBRA Rules 2010 (amended 2019).

S.#	NAME OF ARTICLE /PROJECT	ESTD. COST IN MILLION	EARNEST MONEY	TENDER FEE	TIMEFOR COMPLETION
1.	Maintenance & Repair of Boundary Wall of SSP Office SBA & Police Line SBA	Rs. 7.402 (M)	5%	3000/-	02 Month
2.	Maintenance & Repair of Roof DIGP SBA Residence	Rs. 1.406 (M)	5%	3000/-	02 Month

The blank tender forms will be issued from the date of publication till **26.12.2024 @ 11:00 AM**. The tenders duly filled shall receive back till **26.12.2024 @ 11:30 AM** & opened on same day at **12:00 PM** in presence of all interested bidders who wish to attend & procurement committees.

TERMS & CONDITIONS

- Blank tenders will be issued to the agencies / firms on the payment of tender fee (non-refundable).
- Conditional / blank, incomplete and not accompanied with call deposit will not be considered.
- If the competent authority remains out of Head Quarter on the date of opening of the tenders, if any holiday announced by Government, then tenders will be received & opened on the next working day on same schedule & place.
- Agencies / Firms should be registered with Sindh Revenue Board and Income Tax authorities.
- As per para 2.16(iv) of guideline of SPBRA for procurement of works; average annual financial turnover not less than equivalent cost of the scheme/project during last five years and Experience of similar nature of works (at least one work of 80% of the estimated cost OR two works of 50% of the estimated cost) executed during last five years is required.
- The intending participants must be registered with PEC, for the year 2024-25 limit relevant category.
- The competent authority reserved the right to reject any or all tenders according SPBRA Rules 2010 (Amended 2019).
- The intending contractors should submit the Affidavit of being currently not involved in any litigation and not abandoned the work in any Government Department and not black listed.
- Separate proposal be submitted for each category above.

NOTE:- This NIT can be seen on SPBRA website at www.pmps.pprasindh.gov.pk & Sindh Police website www.sindhpolice.gov.pk

INFORMATION & PROCEDURE

Complete set of bidding documents containing the scope of work and relevant detail along-with specification can be obtained by the Interested Contractors / Contracting Firms from Mr. Imran Lakho (Accountant SSP Office SBA) Cell No. 0300-3216486 during working hours. Method of Procurement will be single stage one envelop Procedure.

(TANVEER HUSSAIN TUNIO) T.St, PPM, PSP
SENIOR SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE SHAHEED BENAZIR ABAD
(& CAIRMAN PROCUREMENT COMMITTEE)

INF-KRY # 3939/24



PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur presenting shield to President of Young Parliamentarians Forum MNA Nosheen Iftikhar.

Successful thrombolysis treatment of stroke patients done at HMC

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A ceremony was held at Hayatabad Medical Complex (HMC) to celebrate the successful thrombolysis treatment of 206 stroke patients. Advisor to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Health, Ihtisham Ali, graced the event as the chief guest. The ceremony was attended by HMC administration, faculty, students, and patients who recovered from stroke after receiving treatment. The primary aim of the event was to raise awareness about stroke prevention and promote advanced treatment techniques.

Speaking at the occasion, Head of the Neurology Department Dr. Mian Ayaz ul Haq and Hospital & Medical Director Professor Shehzad Akbar Khan highlighted that HMC is the first public-sector institution in Pakistan to provide thrombolysis treatment to such a significant number of stroke patients. They noted that since the program began in February 2022, the dedicated efforts of the hospital administration and trained stroke care teams have ensured the successful recovery of 206 patients.

Advisor Health, Ihtisham Ali, assured the inclusion of

thrombolysis treatment in the Sehat Card program and promised its expansion to district-level hospitals. He emphasized the importance of providing free stroke treatment to ensure accessibility for all. "Health and education are our top priorities," said Ihtisham Ali, adding that the government is working on digitization to improve overall service delivery.

The Advisor also expressed gratitude to Martin Dow for their collaboration in making the thrombolysis treatment possible.

During the event, it was revealed that the Neurology Department at HMC continues to offer this treatment with a 50% discount. The department has trained specialists capable of handling stroke cases effectively. Statistics shared during the session noted that ischemic strokes account for 89% of cases, while hemorrhagic strokes comprise 13%. Globally, 5.5 million people are affected by strokes annually, with major risk factors including diabetes, hypertension, and high cholesterol levels.

The speakers stressed that every second counts during a stroke, as brain tissues and neurons begin to

die rapidly. Immediate treatment is crucial to prevent long-term damage and save lives.

High-Level Meeting Held to Expedite Activation of Timergara Medical College

A high-level meeting, chaired by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Health Advisor Ihtesham Ali, was held at the Health Department to address the challenges hindering the functionalization of Timergara Medical College. The meeting was attended by Minister for Population Welfare Malik Liaqat, Minister for Prison Humayun Khan, MNA Bashir Khan, MPA Shafiullah Khan, MPA Ubaid-ur-Rehman, Special Secretary Health Sharif Hussain, Additional Secretary Health Fayaz Sherpao, Deputy Commissioner Lower Dir Arshad Khan, Chief Planning Officer Qaiser Alam, Principal Timergara Medical College Professor Dr. Samiullah, and other relevant officials.

Principal Dr. Samiullah briefed the participants on the obstacles impeding the activation of the medical college. Health Advisor Ihtesham Ali directed the Special Secretary Health to

complete an inquiry into construction deficiencies, recruitment, and procurement processes within 15 days and submit a detailed report.

He also issued instructions to expedite the supply and inspection of equipment purchased for the college. It was further informed that the former Project Director, Dr. Shoukat, would formally hand over the procured items to the Principal.

The Health Advisor emphasized the immediate provision of faculty to operationalize the college at the earliest. During the meeting, the Principal informed the forum that out of 436 sanctioned positions, 228 remain vacant. Recruitment for posts in Grades 7 to 16 has been completed, but the remaining positions require urgent attention. In response, Ihtesham Ali instructed officials to fill the vacant positions through walk-in interviews to ensure the timely availability of staff and faculty.

The Health Advisor reiterated his commitment to making Timergara Medical College operational without further delay, directing all relevant authorities to complete the necessary steps promptly.

Barkwal chairs joint coordination committee meeting of Agriculture Dept

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Agriculture, Major (Retd) Sajjad Barkwal, emphasized the need for the timely utilization of allocated funds for ongoing development projects during a review meeting of the Joint Coordination Committee of the Agriculture Department. He warned that strict action would be taken against officers failing to meet deadlines and directed project directors to ensure effective use of resources.

The Minister instructed the Agriculture Department to provide detailed records of assets related to completed projects and stressed the importance of completing development initiatives on time to maximize public benefit. He also called for regular meetings of Joint Coordination Committees at the district level, warning of action against districts failing to comply. He further urged enhanced coordination among all wings of the Agriculture Department to ensure efficiency.

Attendees of the meeting included Secretary

Agriculture Attur Rehman, Director Generals of various wings of the Agriculture Department, representatives from agricultural universities, and other relevant officials.

Addressing the meeting, the Provincial Minister stressed the importance of using development funds transparently to ensure relief for farmers and increased agricultural output. He noted that any delay or negligence in project execution would not be tolerated.

To further enhance agricultural productivity, the

Minister proposed organizing training programs for farmers on modern farming techniques. He also urged department officers to focus on making barren lands cultivable, which would help address the shortage of agricultural commodities in the province.

Various suggestions were presented during the meeting to advance the agricultural sector, highlighting a shared commitment to sustainable development and the prosperity of the farming community in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

International Human Rights Day observed

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Directorate General Law and Human Rights Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in collaboration with the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) and Blue Veins organized a vibrant event at the University of Peshawar to commemorate International Human Rights Day. The event aimed to foster awareness about human rights, highlight ongoing efforts in the region and promote a collective commitment to upholding human dignity and justice. The event was attended by Mr. Ghulam Ali, Director General law and Human Rights Department, Rizwanullah Regional coordinator NCHR, Qmar Naseem Blue veins, representatives from PCSW, Child Protection commission, Asam Imam commissioner RTS KP, human rights activists, university staff and students. In his address, DG law& HR emphasized the government's commitment to safeguarding human rights across all segments of society. He reiterated the importance of collaboration between government bodies, civil society, and educational institutions in building a more equitable and just society. The program featured thought-provoking panel discussions, speeches, and interactive sessions focusing on this year's Human Rights Day theme: Dignity, Freedom, and Justice for All. Experts, academics, and activists from diverse fields shared insights into addressing regional human rights challenges, fostering inclusivity, and empowering marginalized communities.

Minister pledges swift reforms

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Labour, Fazal Shakoor Khan, visited the Workers Welfare Board (WWB) and vowed to resolve the issues faced by the board's employees on a priority basis. Speaking at a ceremony to distribute upgrade letters to the board's upgraded employees, the Minister announced that the longstanding issue of employee upgradation had been resolved and assured that those yet to be upgraded would be accommodated promptly.

The event was attended by Secretary WWB Muhammad Tufail, Director Admin Saifullah Zafar, Director Education Professor Amjad, Director Works Engineer Asif Majeed, Deputy Director Muhammad Shoaib, and other officials.

During the ceremony, the Secretary WWB briefed the Minister on the successful upgradation of 267 employees and informed him that work on the remaining upgradations was in progress. He further explained that the upgradation process had been approved by the Workers Welfare Fund's Governing Body.

The Provincial Minister directed the concerned authorities to hold Departmental Promotion Committee (DPC) meetings on a priority basis to expedite the promotion of regular employees.

Hamza foundation holds blood donation camp at PEF college

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: As many as 83 healthy students of PEF College University voluntarily donated blood to Hamza Foundation Welfare Thalassemia Center and Blood Transfusion Services Peshawar, on Tuesday.

Hamza foundation has arranged one day blood donation camp with the help and support of Director Engr. Arbab Hidayat Ullah Khan Khawar (Director), Principal Irfan ul Haq Manager Bilal Zeb at PEF College Peshawar. Resource Mobilization officers Ateeq ur Rehman and Ibrarullah Jan delivered lectures to the students and worthy teaching staff about different welfare activities of the organization, especially free of cost treatment providing to 1504 registered poor and underprivileged Thalassemia, Hemophilia patients.

The speakers also delivered motivational speech to the students about the importance of Blood donation. It was very successful blood donation camp. They told the students that through Hamza foundation one can save three precious lives by donation of a single blood bag i.e., Fresh frozen plasma, platelets and RBC.

Almost 83 healthy volunteer students after medical checkup by medical officer, Dr. Kashmala Shah donated blood for saving precious lives of 1504 registered poor and underpriv-

ileged Thalassemia, Hemophilia kids and other blood disorder disease patients at Hamza Foundation.

It is worth mentioning that in Pakistan out of the total blood collection, 70% of blood is utilizing for saving the lives of Thalassemia patients kids and remaining 30% of blood is utilizing during other surgeries.

Founder Chairman Hamza Foundation and Central Executive Member of Thalassemia Federation of Pakistan (TFP) Ijaz Ali Khan highly appreciated

the cooperation and support of the entire management of PEF College University Town Peshawar and also the dedication and spirit of the healthy volunteer students blood donors. On this special occasion, RMOs Hamza Foundation distributed appreciation certificates among the students. Founder Chairman Hamza Foundation Ijaz Ali Khan also thanked the entire management of the College for the arrangements of such a successful blood donation camp for the ailing humanity.



Pakistan, Afghanistan crucial for each other, says SACM

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister on Commerce and Industries Abdul Karim Tordher has said that beside religious and cultural bonds, Pakistan and Afghanistan are also very important for each other due to their geographically close proximity. He said that there is vast potential of economic and trade development between both countries to utilize.

He expressed these

views during a meeting with a diplomatic delegation of Afghanistan headed by Afghan Consul General Hafiz Mohibullah, which called on him here on Tuesday.

The Special Assistant termed the exchange of trade delegation important for promotion of bilateral trade and taking benefits of the markets of each others. He assured about providing all possible support to Afghan students to take advantage of the opportunity of skill training in the province.

During the meeting the Special Assistant and Afghan Consul General also discussed matters of mutual interest and further expansion of trade and business relations, increase in the volume of bilateral trade and taking advantage of investment opportunities.

The Afghan delegation requested the provincial government to take up these matters with the relevant authorities in order to remove hurdles related to transit trade and to facilitate the visa process. He also presented his proposals

regarding the provision of required facilities at the Torkham border. The Afghan Consul General said that thousands of applicants visit the Afghan Consulate in Peshawar on a daily basis, while the number of people coming to Pakistan is also increasing.

Afghan Consul General said that Pakistan has always provided its support and assistance to Afghanistan at all times, the living example of which is the hospitality accorded to millions of refugees for several decades.

Call for showcasing buddhist stupas for economic gains

PESHAWAR (APP): Nestled in the tranquil landscapes of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), the remnants of the Gandhara civilization speak volumes about the region's rich historical and cultural legacy, attracting tourists and followers of Bhuddism from across the globe.

The ancient relics and towering Buddha stupas found in KP not only preserve the legacy of Buddhism but also serve as silent witnesses to the spiritual journey of Lord Buddha, the founder of the Buddhism.

As one enters the northern districts of KP, they are greeted by archaeological sites that harken back to a time when the region was a thriving center of Buddhist culture.

The presence of centuries-old monasteries and stupas scattered across the province paints a vivid picture of a bygone era, where kings, scholars, and monks once gathered to propagate the teachings of Lord Buddha.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, known for its unparalleled cultural and religious significance, has long been home to some of the most impressive Buddhist monuments. These relics of the past stand as a testament to

the area's historical importance as a crossroads for the diffusion of religious thought and practice. The region has seen a confluence of various faiths, each leaving its mark on the landscape.

"The stupas here, each unique in size and architectural design, offer a fascinating glimpse into the rich Buddhist past of this region which needs to be showcased for economic gains," said Bakht Muhammad, Assistant Director of the Archaeology and Museums Department of KP while talking to APP.

He said the stupas are among the most remarkable structures, often located at the heart of Buddhist monastic sites, and are symbolic of the Buddhist tradition of commemorating significant events from the life of Buddha.

They are revered not only for their spiritual significance but also for their architectural ingenuity. Many of these stupas are adorned with intricate carvings and statues, depicting scenes from Buddhist teachings and mythology.

"The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's archaeologists extend beyond just stupas. The region is dotted with rem-

nants of monasteries, statues, and other religious artifacts that tell stories of an ancient Buddhist civilization that flourished here centuries ago. Some of the most famous sites, such as the ruins of Taxila, the Buddhist remains in Swat, and the well-preserved site of Butkara, continue to draw tourists and scholars from across the globe."

For both archaeologists and visitors alike, these ancient sites are a valuable link to understanding the spiritual and cultural ethos of the region. The stupas, with their profound connection to the teachings of Buddhism, offer a unique window into a civilization that once shaped the cultural and intellectual landscape of the Asia.

Bakhtzada Khan said KP was the 26th province of Ghandhara civilization in the region as evident of the Persian inscriptions mentioned by the archaeologists and historians in 2nd Millennium BC.

In 7th century BC, he said, three Chinese historians-- Fahien, Xiuntsang and Sanune had talked about 1,000 stupas in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where monks and archeologists mostly from east southern countries came for performance of reli-

gious obligations.

"The semi-nomadic Aryans had entered KP from the Afghanistan side and settled along rivers Swat, Gomal, Kurram, and Kabul where Gandhara civilization gained roots after Persians conquered it and made it one of the provinces of the Achaemenid Empire."

He said reading and writing in Swat, Dir, Mardan, Charsadda, Peshawar and Malakand, famous for Ghandhara civilization, were started as evidence of the inscriptions mostly made on stones by Iranians.

The official said Ghandhara civilization and Bhuddha stupas witnessed construction as well as onslaught of warriors during different eras including Indo-Greeks with 41 kings and queens, Sethians, Hindus, Parthians, Khushans, Sikhs, Turks Shahi and Muslims who marched to subcontinent for establishment of dynasties.

"The Alexander the Great invaded the subcontinent through Khyber Pass and faced tough resistance while trying to subdue Youafzai tribesmen at Swat and Kunar valleys in 327 BC. Alexander the Great constructed two new cities

Wazira (Barikot) and Ora (Odigram) in Swat district in 327BC where stupas were built."

The White Huns that came from Central Asia in 558 century had inflicted great losses to Bhuddists sites including stupas and monasteries while the Hindus rulers destroyed stupas in existing India in different wars," he said.

The existing Charsadda (Pushkalavati), Peshawar and Hund Swabi were the capital cities of Ghandhara where Bhuddha stupas were constructed.

He said that a Bhuddha stupa was also built at Sulthankhel in Khyber district that attract tourists from Nepal, Sri Lanka and other countries. Bakht Muhammad said that excavation at Shahgee Kadhari, Peshawar conducted by British archaeologists in 1909 led to recoveries of bones of the Lord Bhuddha.

These bones were later gifted to Myanmar while the clay pot where these bones were kept had been preserved at Peshawar Museum being the lone museum of Ghandhara art in the world.

Following death of Lord Bhuddha, he said that five stupas carrying his relics were constructed in exist-

ing Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Butkara Stupa in Swat constructed in 2nd century BC was an architectural masterpiece adorned with intricate carvings and motifs reflected the artistry of that ancient time.

He said Butkara Stupa stands as a symbol of the region's historical significance and is a must-visit destination for history enthusiasts. In the serene town of Takht-i-Bahi (Mardan), the ruins of an ancient Buddhist monastery and stupas take visitors on a journey back in time.

These structures, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, are remarkably well-preserved by Pakistan and provide a unique opportunity to explore the architectural grandeur and spiritual importance of the region's Buddhist past.

Khushan Stupa, situated near Peshawar, constructed around the 3rd century AD, is a testament to the enduring legacy of Buddhism in the area.

The intricate carvings and inscriptions on the stupa narrate stories of the Buddha's life and teachings, offering a window into the spirituality and artistry of ancient Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

As these stupas are his-

torical treasures for many, they are also places of spiritual significance for Buddhists around the world. Pilgrims and tourists alike visit these sites to pay their respects and gain a deeper understanding of Buddhism's roots in the region.

Despite the challenges of time and nature, the Buddha stupas in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa continue to stand proudly, echoing the voices of the past and inviting curious travelers to uncover its secrets.

Incharge Sub-Regional Office Archeology Malakand district, Nawazuddin said that there are a lot of heritage sites in Swat including Bazira, Shigardar Stupa, Ghelegay Buddhist monument, Butkara Stupa 1 and 2, Saidu Stupa and its proper projection through social and digital media can turned KP into a hub of heritage tourism.

Fayaz Khan, a tourist who visited Budha Stupas in Swat said that the government should start an awareness campaign and give the opportunity to Tik Tokers and documentary makers to shoot in these sites.

He said preparation of small videos and films of these stupas and its upload-

ing on social media including Facebook and UTube can bring economic turnaround for Pakistan.

Bakhtzada said that conservation of Bhuddha Stupa at Sultankel Khyber was almost completed to restore its architectural wonder.

He said conservation of stupas at Cheena, Shangal Dagh, Amluk Dara, Abassi Cheena in Swat, Takht Bhai, Jamal Ghari in Mardan, Aziz Dheri and Baja Swabi have been completed.

The signboards on Swat Expressway were installed to help tourists in reaching these archaeological wonders with ease.

The archaeological treasures of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are not only a source of pride for the people of the region but also a compelling attraction for tourists eager to explore the depths of Gandhara's Buddhist heritage.

As Pakistan continues to celebrate and preserve these monumental sites, the legacy of Buddhism in the region remains a profound chapter in the history of both Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the broader South Asian cultural sphere that continues to inspire generations to come.



In brief

Plan for farmers unveiled F.P. Report

BHAKKAR: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif has unveiled a comprehensive plan on Tuesday to economically stabilize farmers in the province. A key component of this initiative is the distribution of green tractors, which will provide farmers with the necessary tools to develop their agricultural skills and increase their economic prospects. According to DC office, ceremony was held at the District Council Hall, where Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ashraf and MPA Aamir Inayat Khan Shahani were the guests of honor. Ashraf emphasized that the green tractor scheme will offer ample opportunities for farmers to grow and become economically strong. MPA Shahani highlighted the Punjab government's commitment to the welfare of farmers, noting that a large number of 475 tractors will be distributed to farmers across the province. The government is also providing a subsidy of one million rupees per tractor, which is a significant relief for farmers. Deputy Director of Agriculture Extension Dr. Amir Hussain announced that the distribution of green tractors will commence immediately, with 55,000 applications already received from farmers across the district.

Anniversary of Ejaz held F.P. Report

THATTA: Thousands of people, including top PPP leaders and notables, attended the death anniversary of the late former provincial minister, Syed Ejaz Ali Shah Shirazi, observed today with great reverence at the Shirazi House in Thatta city. PPP Sindh President Nisar Ahmed Khuhro, MPA Saad Ghani, PPP leaders Najmi Alam, as well as various provincial ministers, advisors, MNAs and MPAs from districts across Sindh were among the attendees. Among the prominent figures present were Sadiq Ali Memon, Ashiq Hussain Zardari, and PPP Thatta's Information Secretary Syed Mahmood Alam Shah Bukhari. In their speeches, PPP Sindh leaders and members of the Shirazi family paid tribute to the public services rendered by the late Syed Ejaz. They vowed to continue serving the people of Thatta. Speaking on the occasion, Syed Shafqat Hussain Shah Shirazi, Syed Ayaz Ali Shah Shirazi, and Syed Riyaz Hussain Shah Shirazi stated that the Shirazi family continued to serve the public and would always remain devoted to this cause.

Scholarship cheques presented F.P. Report

TANDOJAM: A scholarship distribution ceremony was held at the Sindh Agriculture University (SAU) in Tandojam, where 54 undergraduate scholars received cheques under the Sindh Educational Endowment Fund (SEEF), a Government of Sindh initiative. The event, hosted in the Vice Chancellor's Secretariat, was chaired by Dr. Fateh Marri, Vice Chancellor of SAU. Dr. Marri emphasized the significance of education and research in today's competitive world. "Without dedication to hard work and academic excellence, it is impossible to secure a place in the private or public sectors," he stated. He further said that the university was committed to empowering students through various initiatives, such as those under the Student Support Services, which offer financial assistance, literacy training, and other vital opportunities.

CPEC project in Pakistan

Scholar's research explores world powers' policy



Haleem Asad

LOWER DIR: The University of Malakand (UoM) assistant administrator officer and former PRO Dr. Dost Muhammad Yousafzai has successfully completed his Ph.D. in Media and Communication studies at the University of Central Punjab (UCP) Lahore, presenting an in-depth research study on the "Foreign Policy of USA, India, China, and Pakistan about CPEC: Content Analysis of Mainstream Newspapers".

The scholar accomplished his research work under the supervision of Dr. Atif Ashraf, head of the department of film, TV, and digital media, UCP. The external evaluators for the defense were Dr. Mian Javed Aslam, Associate Professor at the University

of Management and Technology, Lahore, and Dr. Babar Hussain Shah, Assistant Professor at Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad.

Dr. Aisha Hakim, Assistant Professor and PhD Program Coordinator, UCP served as the internal examiner. The defense session was convened by Dr. Fawad Baig, Dean of FMMC, who extended his heartfelt congratulations to Dr. Dost Muhammad on his success. The evaluators praised the research for its significant contributions to understanding how the foreign policies of the USA, India, China, and Pakistan regarding CPEC are represented in their respective print media.

The dissertation explores the varying foreign policies of these four major countries regarding the China-

Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), analyzing content from mainstream newspapers to understand the media's portrayal and the strategic implications of CPEC on international relations. Dr. Dost Muhammad Yousafzai research highlights the challenges faced by CPEC, including political tensions, security concerns, economic dependencies, and infrastructural hurdles, as reflected in the media narratives.

Expressing gratitude, Dr. Dost Muhammad Yousafzai thanked his family, friends, and mentors for their unwavering support throughout his rigorous academic journey. Dr. Dost Muhammad looks forward to contributing to the field of international relations and foreign policy with this newfound expertise.

Smart start science and art competition organized

Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: The Divisional and District Administration has organized in Kohat the first ever and unique event of its nature under the title "Smart Start Science and Art Competition" at Kohat Sports Complex under the chairmanship of the Deputy Commissioner Kohat Abdul Akram, the other day.

Students of government and semi-government middle, high and higher secondary schools of Kohat district participated in the event. Students showcased their talent in science mod-

els and various art categories like calligraphy, paintings, modeling and other disciplines. Large number of people including students, teachers, and people associated with the education sector also participated in the event.

It may be recalled that this competition was organized with special funding of the Commissioner Kohat Division and Deputy Commissioner Kohat with the aim of promoting academic interest, scientific curiosity and creativity among students. Certificates and Cash Prizes were also distributed

among the students and the groups, on this occasion.

Deputy Commissioner Kohat gave prizes of Rs.8000/-, Rs.5000/- and Rs.3000/- respectively to the successful students. The educationists present at the event welcomed the holding of the event and said that such programs increase the academic interest of the students as well as develop their creative and scientific abilities. They while stressing for holding such useful competition in future, said that it would prove to be a milestone in the educational landscape of Kohat.

Wana journalists meet Commandant Scouts

F.P. Report

WANA: A delegation of Wana Press Club, led by General Secretary Irfanullah Wazir met with Commandant Scouts Force Tahir Khan to discuss pressing regional issues including unemployment, the closure of the Pak-Afghan Angoor Adda border gate and the presence of extremist elements, on Tuesday.

During the meeting, Colonel Safdar and Captain

Ibrahim were also present. Commandant emphasized the detrimental impact of extremist elements on business and security, commending local journalists for their sacrifices in combating terrorism.

He assured that efforts would be made to resolve public grievances and expressed optimism about reopening of Angoor Adda crossing which has a vital economic implication including creation of employment opportunities

and trade relations. He urged locals and political parties to support efforts to eradicate terrorism for establishment of everlasting peace.

The press club general secretary Irfanullah Wazir thanked the Commandant for addressing regional concerns and pledged for advocacy of public rights. The meeting was seen as a positive step towards restoring stability, reopening the border gate, and fostering regional prosperity.

Functions held to mark Int'l Human Day in Dir

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The district administration, in collaboration with the district youth affairs department, the Malakand Youth Assembly, and the Child Protection Unit, on Tuesday organized a seminar and a walk at Government High School Balambat to mark the International Human Rights Day. Another such function was arranged by the administration in collaboration with the National Commission for Human Development (NCHD) at government degree college Gulabad, to mark the day.

The event was attended by government officials including additional deputy commissioner Basheer Khan, Principal Abdus Salim Khan, child protection officer Tayyab Khan and district youth officer Malik Shehzad Tariq.

Human rights activist Akbar Khan, highlighted the significance of the day and outlined the concept of human rights and elaborated on this year's theme. He emphasized that the purpose of the day was to raise awareness about individu-

als' physical, social, and cultural rights and to ensure their welfare. He also explained the 30 articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) to the students.

The students' involvement added pleasure to the event and led to an engaging question-and-answer session. The ADC Basheer Khan, shared his thoughts on the role of the commission in fostering human rights in the country. The School Principal Abdus Salim, discussed the global framework of human rights' law and the implementation status of international human rights treaties.

Tayyab, the District Child Protection Officer, emphasized the importance of child protection and discussed the legal framework that supports it. He highlighted various laws and regulations designed to safeguard children's rights and ensure their well-being. This includes mechanisms for reporting abuse, providing support services for affected children, and promoting awareness of children's rights within the community. At the conclusion of the event, appreciation certificates were pre-

sented to the participants, and shields were awarded to the guests and other prominent individuals.

Anti-polio drive preparations finalized

SARGODHA (INP): Anti-polio drive has been finalized in the tehsil Sillanwali, here on Tuesday. According to a spokesperson, Deputy District (DD) Health Officer Tehsil Headquarter (THQ) Sillanwali, Dr. Abdul Rehman said that five days of anti-polio drive start from 16th of December 2024 (Monday) to 20th of December 2024 (Friday) in 19 union councils of the tehsil.

He said that over 72,614 children of under five years would be administered. Abdul Rehman said that 281 teams for polio vaccination to children has been formed out of which 255 mobile teams of polio workers will go door to door in rural areas for polio vaccination. He also informed that 19 polio vaccination teams would perform their duties in the basic health units premises.

AWKUM holds seminar on menace of corruption

F.P. Report

MARDAN: A daylong seminar was organized under the supervision of the Provost Office at Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan (AWKUM) with the support of administration and District Youth Office to observe Anti-Corruption Day, in which competitions were held among students in five activities of Urdu and English speech, Urdu and English essay writing and poster painting, on Tuesday.

Deputy Commissioner Mardan Additional Deputy Commissioner Finance and Planning, District Youth Officer Usman Khan, professors, lecturers, media representatives and a large number of university students participated in the anti-corruption seminar. Deputy Commissioner said that everyone should start accountability from themselves to eliminate corruption that we should adopt the light of self-accountability in the light of the teachings of our ancestors to create a corruption-free society.

DC said that today's day is celebrated globally against corruption and corruption and hatred/deslike against corruption and corruption is expressed collectively in the whole world on this day. Corruption has become a scourge for the society, civilized societies never suffer from any expediency to eliminate deadly diseases like corruption and corruption in their state system and social attitudes and instead of handing over their generations to corrupt elements they should remove corruption from their society.

Let's try together to end the curse, We also have to unite against corruption with the determination and certainty that a corruption-free society is the only guarantee for the survival of our generations. At the end of the seminar, the Deputy Commissioner took a pledge from the audience to play their role in eradicating corruption. Trophies and certificates were given to the students who got the first, second and third positions in the best speeches and painting.

Sujawal Bar to celebrate anniversary of Prince Karim

F.P. Report

SUJAWAL: The Sujawal Bar Association has announced, to hold an event on 13th December 2024 to mark 88th birth anniversary of Prince Karim Aga Khan, the 49th spiritual leader of Shia Ismaili Muslims. General Secretary of district bar association Advocate Latif Khattai told this correspondent that the office bearers in a meeting held the other day unanimously decided to pay homage to Prince Karim Aga Khan for his remarkable services and support to Pakistan throughout his lifetime.

He further said that the Aga Khan family throughout history had worked for the uplift and progress of Muslims across the world particularly the subcontinent. He said that a cake cutting ceremony would be held at the district bar room followed by speeches containing tribute to the eminent religious figure. The event he said would be presided over by Liaquat Jamari, de facto President of the Bar Association.

Talking about the services of Prince Karim Aga Khan and his Grandfather Sir Sultan Muhammad Shah Aga Khan the newly elected President of DBA Sujawal Sajjad Ali Khawaja said Sir Sultan Muhammad Shah Aga Khan led the Muslim emancipation movement that eventually culminated into Pakistan. "History suggests that Sir Sultan Muhammad Shah Aga Khan inspired several Muslim leaders including Allama Iqbal to work for the development of the Muslims of the Subcontinent. Advocate Ayaz Ali mentioned that Prince Karim Aga Khan always stood by Pakistan in the testing times, particularly the flash floods of 2010, 2015, 2022 and also helped the government to procure vaccination during the outbreak of Covid-19.

Cleanliness issue makes lives of citizens miserable

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: As soon as the cleaning contract was given to a private company, the streets of the city, including Gujranwala Road, started turning into chaos which made the life of the citizens miserable. The private company does not have the required sanitation workers, nor the required equipment, nor a comprehensive plan for cleaning the city.

According to the details, a private company was given a contract worth millions of rupees to improve the sanitation system in Hafizabad city. This private company only cleans some main roads and streets in the city, while all the streets, roads and neighborhoods of the city have turned into a dirty mess.

Garbage is piled up in front of a well-known educational institution (Virtual University Campus) on Gujranwala Road, while several feet of dirty water has accumulated in the streets of many areas due to which the residents of the area have been trapped in their homes but instead of coming to the Hafizabad

field to supervise the work of the private company, the Assistant Commissioner is sitting in his office and due to which the Chief Minister's "Suthra Programme" has been left in a state of chaos throughout the city. The citizens have started cursing the Assistant Commissioner along with the officials of the private company.

Meanwhile, Special Assistant to Chief Minister Punjab for Special Education, Sania Aashiq has said that special children are our precious and proud assets of our society while special attention, love and affection of teachers, parents and people belong to different segments of society can make the special children a responsible and useful citizen of the society.

She expressed these views while visiting government special education school Hafizabad, government slow learners centre Hafizabad and Special Education School Pindi Bhattian. Former Federal Minister and Chief Minister's Coordinator for Population Welfare Punjab Saira Afzal Tarar,

Parliamentary Secretary MPA Mian Shahid Hussain Bhatti, DC Abdul Razzaq were also accompanied by her.

Sania Aashiq witnessed academic activities to visit classrooms and reviewed different facilities being provided to special children in the education schools. DC Abdul Razzaq gave briefing to the Special Assistant regarding revamping, necessary repair and to make the school centre of excellence/model school. Sania Aashiq assured on this occasion that solid steps would be taken to provide latest facilities to students in the school of special children.

She further said that the present Punjab government led by Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif was taking all possible measures to improve education standard and to ensure provision of maximum facilities to special children in the province. Later, a meeting was also held at district complex. DC Abdul Razzaq, Mian Shahid Hussain Bhatti, officers of district administration and special education department attended the meeting.

DIG, Rangers official review katcha operation

F.P. Report

KHAIRPUR: DIG Sukkur, Captain (Retd) Faisal Abdullah Chachar, along with Sector Commander Shabbaz Rangers Brigadier Nadeem, SSP Ghotki Samiullah Soomro, and Wing Commander Colonel Saqib Naseer, monitored the ongoing anti-dacoit operation in Katcha Bindi area in Ghotki district on Tuesday. They also inspected security situation at the under-construction Ghotki-Kashmore Bridge.

SSP Ghotki gave a detailed briefing about the ongoing operation against dacoits in the Katcha area and the security arrangements at the under-construction Ghotki-Kashmore Bridge. On this occasion, ASP Mirpur Mathelo, DSP Ronti, and officers and personnel stationed at the frontlines in the Kacha area

were also present.

DIG Sukkur, accompanied by Sector Commander Shabbaz Rangers, SSP Ghotki, and Wing Commander Rangers, visited the police pickets in the Katcha area of Sub-Division Katchu Bandi. During the inspection, DIG Sukkur encouraged the officers and personnel, emphasizing the importance of their duties, and briefed them about their responsibility to protect the public from dacoits.

He instructed the police personnel to remain alert, especially at the checkpoints, and ensure snap-checking of vehicles, motorcycles, and suspicious individuals on all routes leading to the Katcha area. He issued immediate instructions to resolve any issues faced by the police officers and personnel,

including the provision of additional resources, manpower, weapons, and other necessary facilities, while also reviewing measures for strengthening and repairing the police pickets.

Later, DIG Sukkur, together with Sector Commander Shabbaz Rangers, SSP Ghotki, and Wing Commander Shabbaz Rangers, inspected the under-construction Ghotki-Kashmore Bridge and, after the security inspection, addressed the officers and personnel on duty. He stated, "The protection of the lives and property of the people is our top priority. The sacrifices made by the police martyrs will never go in vain. For the sake of peace, we are ready to make further sacrifices. Those who disrupt peace and order will not be spared in any circumstances."

Stakeholders discuss Rohri Master Plan

F.P. Report

KHAIRPUR: The Sindh government has announced the preparation of a master plan for 12 secondary cities of the province. The first package of the plan includes Rohri, Khairpur, Ghotki, and Mirpur Mathelo from the Sukkur division.

A consultative meeting regarding the Rohri Master Plan was held on Tuesday at the Commissioner Office in Sukkur, with various stakeholders in attendance. The meeting was attended by Sindh government's spokesperson and Mayor of Sukkur, Barrister Arslan Islam Sheikh, and others.

Dr Imtiaz Bhatti, Director General of Urban Planning, stated that the initiative to create master plans for Sindh's smaller cities had been ongoing for several years. "Some plans have already been completed, while others are in the process of being developed."

Bhatti emphasized the ongoing consultation with stakeholders to incorporate their suggestions. He mentioned that it was the preliminary stage, and changes

could still be made at this stage. The new suggestions received during the consultation would be incorporated into the master plan, and further consultations would be held with stakeholders to inform them about the inclusion of their proposals.

Barrister Arslan Islam Sheikh, said that following the guidance of the leadership of the Pakistan Peoples Party, the Sindh government was working on both long-term and short-term master plans for secondary cities to address urban growth challenges. He assured that those master plans would be prepared according to international standards and that their implementation would be ensured to effectively address urban challenges.

Mr Sheikh further mentioned that the Sindh Planning and Development Department's Urban Unit was working on master plans for cities with a population of over one lakh to create long-term socio-economic development plans for these cities. He also highlighted that the Sukkur master plan, notified in 2018, had several flaws that need to be corrected. He

referred to the current plan as a general development concept paper rather than a master plan.

A master plan should include specific zoning, identifying areas for industry, slums, and urban roads, among other details, he added. Sheikh said that the Sindh Building Control Authority had earlier presented a development concept paper for the city, which was later notified as the master plan. As the Mayor of Sukkur, he raised this issue with the Sindh government, and work was underway to update it to meet international standards.

Regarding Rohri, Sheikh said that some areas had been classified as environmentally hazardous, but he believed that those areas, where development had already taken place, did not pose environmental risks. "If there are any risks, necessary measures can be taken to mitigate them." He emphasized that this is more of a consultative process, where all stakeholders are providing their opinions to ensure that the final document becomes a concrete and real master plan.

Art council presents Sindhi improvisational drama

F.P. Report

LARKANA: Arts Council of Pakistan Larkana presented the 14th and last Sindhi improvisational stage play "Masiha" of "Larkana Drama Festival". Presented below, written by the writer Siddiq Mithal Ghachal while the assistant director of the drama was Wajid Katian, the drama.

Actors Syed Salim Shah, Shams Solangi, Reema Naz, Siddiq Mithal Ghachal won praise from the audience with their best roles. In the stage play, it was shown that a man's mother falls ill, he

brings the mother to the doctor, but due to the doctor's carelessness, the woman dies and the same person's family is delivered, on which the lady doctor is present.

SSP annoys delay in registration of FIR: An important police meeting was held under the chairmanship SSP Larkana, on this occasion Haseeb Javed Soomar Memon was appointed as SP Investigation in Larkana district and Tawfiq Ahmed Sudhaya was posted as DSP Investigation Larkana, while notice was taken of the delay in filing the FIR.

For improvement, con-

crete steps are being taken by IGP Sindh Ghulam Nabi Memon.

On this occasion, SSP Larkana issued clear instructions and orders to all the officers participating in the meeting, in case of cognizable crime like theft and robbery, delay in filing FIR will be intolerable, while SSP Larkana Strict instructions have been issued to the SHO's of all the police stations of the district to avoid registration of false FIRs and in case of omission in registration of legitimate FIRs and complaints are received by the respective SHO's.



Germany to tighten people-smuggling law

BERLIN (BBC): Germany has said it will tighten its law to make it easier to prosecute those helping to smuggle migrants to the UK, as part of a new plan agreed between the two countries. Currently facilitating people-smuggling is not technically illegal in Germany if it is to a third country outside the EU - which, following Brexit, includes the UK.

Under the new agreement the Home Office says Germany has pledged to make the activity a clear criminal offence. Home Secretary Yvette Cooper said the "ground-breaking" new agreement would help tackle the criminal gangs organising small boat crossings across the Channel.

Conservative shadow home secretary Chris Philp said the plan did not "go far enough" and would not provide the deterrent necessary to reduce the number of crossings. Earlier this year, a five-month long BBC investigation exposed the significant German connection to small boat crossings in the Channel, with people-smugglers operating in the west German city of Essen. The new joint UK-German agreement comes as the Home Office's own Border Security Command warns that Channel crossings "are the most dangerous they have ever been".

Charlie Eastaugh, director of international operations at the command, told the BBC: "We've seen tyre inner tubes being used in place of life jackets, it's extraordinarily dangerous, they are death traps. There are fewer boats and fewer engines in supply, we have seized over 450 boats and engines across Europe - and organised crime gangs are taking greater risks. We're seeing increased numbers in these boats because of the disruptive work we have carried out with our law enforcement partners in Europe."

More than 33,000 have crossed the English Channel by small boat this year, which is higher than the 29,000 last year, but below the record numbers in 2022. More than 70 people have died trying to make the crossing this year this year, and the average number of people per boat has risen to 53 compared with 10 back in 2019. After coming into power in July, the Labour government ditched the previous Conservative government's plan to deter crossings by sending to



Rwanda those making the journey. Instead Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer said his government would focus on tackling the criminal gangs arranging the crossings.

As part of that approach, Home Secretary Yvette Cooper has signed an agreement with Germany's Interior Minister Nancy Faeser, committing to co-operation on tackling people smuggling. Under the Joint Action Plan, Germany has confirmed its intention to make clear that activities in Germany that facilitate migrant smuggling to the UK will be deemed criminal offences. The joint action plan also commits the two countries to "exchanging expertise with a special focus on removing migrant-smuggling content from social media platforms". The UK government said: "Once enacted, this anticipated law change is expected to significantly increase the number of prosecutions made in relation to migrant smuggling."

In October, the BBC uncovered the activities of small boat smugglers based in Germany, including how they used multiple secret warehouses to evade the German police. At the time, one UK Home Office source told the BBC there was "frustration" about Germany's legal framework, which did not technically consider the arranging of people smuggling to countries outside of the EU to be illegal. Speaking, Cooper said the partnership would help the UK go after

the gangs who had been "getting away with it for too long". Faeser said it would "help us end the inhumane activities of criminal migrant smuggling organisations".

"Many of these crimes are planned in Germany. Together, we are now countering this unscrupulous business with even more resolve." Responding to the announcement, Philp said: "The British public deserves a serious plan to control our borders and stop criminal gangs. The National Crime Agency has said a deterrent is necessary to reduce the number of crossings, yet Labour scrapped the only deterrent before it even got started. "Meanwhile the numbers of illegal immigrants coming here continue to climb, with an 18% increase compared to the same period last year, with more than 20,000 people having made the crossing since the election."

The plan was signed ahead of a meeting of the Calais Group in London, hosted on Tuesday by the UK and Germany and attended by ministers and police from France, Belgium and the Netherlands. Sir Keir has said he wants to reduce both regular and irregular migration but has avoided setting a target for cutting numbers, arguing that an "arbitrary" cap would not work. Privately, Labour ministers acknowledged that tackling irregular migration would be key to how they are judged by voters.

Putin urged to understand destructiveness of N-weapons

OSLO (AP): Terumi Tanaka, a survivor of the US atomic bombings of Japan and the representative of an organization that won this year's Nobel Peace Prize, called on Russian President Vladimir Putin to stop making nuclear threats.

The 92-year-old spoke at a news conference in Oslo, Norway, a day before a ceremony where he is to deliver a lecture on behalf of Nihon Hidankyo, an organization of survivors of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that won this year's prize. Asked by a reporter if he had a message for Putin, Tanaka said that the Russian leader's repeated nuclear threats convinced him that Putin must not understand how devastating the use of nuclear weapons would be.

He said that his organization's message to Putin - which he said had also been conveyed to the Russian leader directly - is that "nuclear weapons are things which must never be used." "I don't think he has even thought about this or understood this. Therefore, he is able to say these kind of things. So I think that how we can change his way of thinking is what we need to do to have him really understand what these are," he said through a translator.

The first US atomic bombing killed 140,000 people in the city of Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 1945. A second on Nagasaki on Aug. 9, 1945, killed another 70,000. Japan surrendered on Aug. 15, ending World War II. Tanaka was 13 and living in Nagasaki when the United States dropped the atomic bomb there. While he did not suffer major injuries himself, he lost five family members, and has said that the images of burned bodies in the devastated city are etched in his memory.

Jørgen Watne Frydnes, chair of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, said in announcing the award weeks ago that it was made as the "taboo against the use of nuclear weapons is under pressure." The committee noted that rather than embrace disarmament, nuclear powers are upgrading their arsenals, while other countries appear to be preparing to acquire nuclear weapons. It also noted that threats are being made to use the weapons in ongoing warfare, an apparent reference to Russia's threats amid its war in Ukraine. The Japanese group's elderly members are calling for the abolishment of nuclear weapons, a message also directed at the United States.

Tanaka noted that "we are old now" but still carry a "heavy sense of responsibility" as witnesses to remind the world of the destructiveness of nuclear weapons. "Nuclear weapons and humanity cannot coexist," he said. Back in Japan, Empress Masako described the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Nihon Hidankyo as a key event of this year that impressed upon her the importance of global peace efforts. In a statement, she said she "felt anew the importance for the people of the world to strive for mutual understanding and work together in order to build a peaceful world."

Ghana's ex-leader declared winner

ACCRA (AP): Ghana's former leader John Dramani Mahama was declared the winner of the presidential election and pledged a "a life of limitless opportunity" for citizens after voters vented their anger over the country's worst cost-of-living crisis in a generation.

Previously president of the West African nation between 2012 and 2017, the 65-year-old Mahama received 56.5% of votes cast, or 6.3 million votes, the electoral commission said. His main opponent from the current governing party, Vice President Mahamudu Bawumia, conceded defeat and got 41%, or 4.6 million votes. Electoral commissioner Jean Mensa said vote-counting continued in nine constituencies but would not change the final result. Turnout was just over 60%. Mahama had promised to "reset" the country on various fronts.

Syrian asylum seekers in limbo as countries stop applications

LONDON (BBC): A number of European countries, including the UK, have suspended the processing of asylum applications for Syrians, after the downfall of former president Bashar al-Assad. Austria's caretaker government has stopped all asylum claims from Syrians and says it is making plans to to repatriate or deport people back to their homeland, arguing that the situation in the country has changed fundamentally.

Germany (home to a million Syrians), the United Kingdom, France, and Greece have all said they will halt asylum decisions for now. The moves potentially leave thousands of Syrians in limbo, following the collapse of the Assad regime after 50 years of brutal rule. Since 2011, the UN says more than 14 million Syrians have been forced to flee their homes in search of safety.

Austria's Chancellor Karl Nehammer, a conservative who is a hardliner on immigration, said in a post on X that the government would "support all Syrians who have found refuge in Austria and want to return to their home country". He added that the "security situation in Syria must also be reassessed in order to make deportations possible again in the future". In a statement, Austria's Interior

Ministry said "the political situation in Syria has changed fundamentally and, above all, rapidly in recent days".

Around 95,000 Syrians live in Austria, many of whom arrived during the migrant crisis of 2015 and 2016. A backlash against them has fuelled support for the far right and conservatives in Austria. Germany's Federal Office for Migration and Refugees has put on hold all pending applications from Syrian asylum seekers. Officials say the political situation is so uncertain in Syria, that it is not possible to reach a proper decision about whether the country is safe or not. At the moment 47,270 Syrians in Germany are waiting for an answer to their asylum applications. Those who have already been granted asylum are not affected. Germany has the largest Syrian diaspora population outside of the Middle East, with about one million Syrians living in Germany. About 700,000 are classed as refugees.

British Home Secretary Yvette Cooper confirmed that the UK has "paused asylum decisions on cases from Syria while the Home Office reviews and monitors the current situation". Cooper said the situation in the country is "moving extremely fast after the fall

of the Assad regime" and added that some people are already returning to Syria. Between 2011 and 2021 more than 30,000 Syrians were granted asylum in the UK.

Most of these were resettled under humanitarian schemes and came directly from other countries they had fled to, such as Turkey and Lebanon. In 2019, it was calculated that around 47,000 Syrians were living in the UK, but that number is thought to have since fallen to around 30,000. France is working on a policy similar to the one put forward by Germany, with a decision expected in the next few hours, according to the Reuters news agency. Meanwhile, thousands of Syrians exiled in Lebanon and Jordan have been returning home. But on the Lebanese border, the flow has been in both directions. A BBC correspondent there said an increasing number of Syrians were trying to get into Lebanon, prompting Lebanese military reinforcements. He says some feared an increase in chaos or crime at home, though they also say they have received reassurances this will not happen. Lebanon hosts more than one million Syrian refugees but has been tightening up the rules for them to enter the country.

Syrians line up at Turkish border crossings

CILVEGOZU BORDER CROSSING, Turkey (AP): Hundreds of Syrian refugees gathered at two border crossings in southern Turkey, eagerly anticipating their return home following the fall of Bashar Assad's government.

Many arrived at the Cilvegozu and Oncupinar gates at daybreak, draped in blankets and coats. Some camped by the barriers, warming at makeshift fires. The crossings correspond to the Bab al-Hawa and Bab al-Salameh gates on the Syrian side. Among those waiting at Cilvegozu was 28-year-old Muhammed Zin, who fled Damascus in 2016 and has been living and working in Istanbul.

"Assad was shooting us, killing us," he told The Associated Press. "I will return to Syria now. Thank God, the war is over." Assad's fall has sparked widespread joy among Turkey's 3 million Syrian refugees, with many taking to the streets of Istanbul and other cities to celebrate. Syrians removed the government's flag from the Syrian Consulate in Istanbul, replacing it with the opposition's flag. At the Oncupinar border gate, Mustafa Sultan, 29, said he was crossing into Syria to find his older brother who was imprisoned in Damascus under Assad's rule.

"I haven't seen him for 13 years. The prisons have been emptied so I am going to go see whether he's alive," he said. Turkish officials have not said how many Syrians have returned since Assad's downfall. But Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said the numbers would increase as Syria stabilizes, and announced plans to reopen a third border crossing to prevent congestion. "As Syria gains more stability, God willing, voluntary, safe and honorable returns will increase," Erdogan said in a televised address following a Cabinet meeting.

Turkey welcomed Syrian refugees with open arms in the early years of Syria's civil war that broke out in 2011 - becoming host to the world's largest number of refugees. Ankara believed the conflict would end quickly and the influx would be temporary. But as Turkey faced economic challenges, public opinion toward the refugees soured, forcing Erdogan's government to seek ways to ensure their safe and voluntary repatriation.

Turkish officials now hope that a significant number of Syrians will return voluntarily. "We will continue our efforts to ensure the safe and voluntary return of Syrians and to rebuild the country," Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said. At

Cilvegozu, some refugees wheeled their suitcases while others carried belongings in sacks. Authorities set up a checkpoint some 5 kilometers (3 miles) away, only allowing Syrians with proper documents to the border gate. HaberTurk television reported, Zakariya Mori al-Shami, 31, who arrived in Turkey in 2019, was waiting to cross with his wife and two children to return to Aleppo. He hopes to rebuild his home, which was destroyed during the conflict.

Anxious to rejoin his family in Damascus, Mohammed al Muhbuhar, 27, said he headed to the border "immediately" after Assad left. "There is no more torture. God willing, Syria will be better," he said. Hundreds of displaced Syrians were also returning from Lebanon.

Sami Abdel-Latif, a construction worker from Hama who hoped to join his wife and four children, said while the future in Syria is uncertain, "anything is better than Bashar." He said he expected some chaos initially but that eventually the situation would settle down. "Look at Aleppo now," Abdel-Latif said, referring to the first major city taken by opposition forces more than a week ago, where life has continued more or less as normal.

Mass evacuation of Philippine villages underway after volcanic eruption

MANILA (AP): About 87,000 people were being evacuated in a central Philippine region Tuesday a day after a volcano briefly erupted with a towering ash plume and superhot streams of gas and debris hurtling down its western slopes.

The latest eruption of Mount Kanlaon on central Negros island did not cause any immediate casualties, but the alert level was raised one level, indicating further and more explosive eruptions may occur. Volcanic ash fell on a wide area, including Antique province, more than 200 kilometers (124 miles) across seawards west of the volcano, obscuring visibility and posing health risks, Philippine chief volcanologist Teresito Bacolcol and other officials said by telephone.

At least six domestic flights and a flight bound for Singapore were canceled and two local flights were diverted in the region and Tuesday due to Kanlaon's eruption, according to the Civil Aviation Authority of the

Philippines. The mass evacuations were being carried out urgently in towns and villages nearest the western and southern slopes of Kanlaon which were blanketed by its ash, including in La Castellana town in Negros Occidental where nearly 47,000 people have to be evacuated out of a 6-kilometer (3.7-mile) danger zone, the Office of Civil Defense said.

More than 6,000 have moved to evacuation centers aside from those who have temporarily transferred to the homes of relatives in La Castellana by Tuesday morning, the town's mayor, Rhumyla Mangilimutan, told The Associated Press by telephone. President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said authorities were ready to provide support to large numbers of displaced villagers and that his social welfare secretary flew early Tuesday to the affected region.

"We are ready to support the families who have been evacuated outside the 6-kilometer danger zone," Marcos told reporters.

Government scientists were monitoring the air quality due to the risk of contamination from toxic volcanic gases that may require more people to be evacuated from areas affected by eruption.

Disaster-response contingents were rapidly establishing evacuation centers and seeking supplies of face masks, food and hygiene packs ahead of the Christmas season, traditionally a peak time for holiday travel and family celebrations in the largely Roman Catholic nation. Authorities also shut schools and imposed a nighttime curfew in the most vulnerable areas.

The Philippines' Institute of Volcanology and Seismology said the nearly four-minute eruption of Kanlaon volcano had caused a pyroclastic density current - a superhot stream of gas, ash, debris and rocks that can incinerate anything in its path. "It's a one-time but major eruption," Bacolcol told the AP, adding that volcanologists were assessing if eruption

spewed old volcanic debris and rocks clogged in and near the summit crater or was caused by rising magma from underneath.

Few volcanic earthquakes were detected ahead of explosion, Bacolcol said. The alert level around Kanlaon was placed to the third-highest of a five-step warning system, indicating "magmatic eruption" may have begun and may progress to further explosive eruptions.

The 2,435-meter (7,988-foot) volcano, one of the country's 24 most-active volcanoes, last erupted in June sending hundreds of villagers to emergency shelters. In 1996, three hikers were killed near the peak and several others were later rescued when Kanlaon erupted without warning, officials said. Located in the so-called Pacific "Ring of Fire," a region prone to earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, the Philippines is also lashed by about 20 typhoons and storms a year and is among the countries most prone to natural disasters.

Ukrainian man fleeing war rescued with his kitten on a perilous journey

BUCHAREST (AP): A Ukrainian man who embarked on a perilous journey fleeing his war-torn country into Romania was rescued from a deep mountain ravine in subzero temperatures with an unlikely companion: his months-old kitten named Peach.

More than a dozen rescuers worked in a harsh blizzard to save Vladislav Duda, 28, who was found "soaked and frozen" and severely hypothermic in a 400-meter (437-yard) deep ravine in the northern Maramures region last week, according to the region's mountain rescue service. Duda had fled Ukraine to avoid being drafted into his country's armed forces fighting Russia.

"The cat was warm and was warming him ... so he saved his life," Dan Benga, the director of the Maramures mountain rescue service, told The Associated Press. "The only thing we saw he is car-

ing about is the cat. He doesn't care about himself."

When the rescue team located and found the Ukrainian, they unzipped his jacket and discovered Peach snuggled up inside. Benga recalls asking Duda if he was OK, to which he replied: "I'm happy because my cat is alive. I got a chance from God for a new life. The happiest moment is because the cat is here with me," Benga recalled Duda saying. The auburn-colored kitten, a tomcat named "Peach" in Ukrainian, was experiencing the effects of malnutrition after they ran out of food four days earlier and melted snow helped to keep him alive.

"It's like a dream, after all I have been through, I only hoped to be found and to survive," Duda, who worked as a journalist in Ukraine, told the AP. "Peach kept my heart warm and he kept my faith alive." A helicopter retrieval was initially launched but was

aborted due to dangerous weather that hampered visibility. Ground rescuers then embarked on a grueling mission through deep snow and temperatures as low as minus 10 degrees Celsius (14 degrees Fahrenheit) until they reached the pair.

During the complex ascent out of the ravine which took more than five hours, the Ukrainian would not let go of his kitten. He kept Peach clutched to his chest "from the bottom to the top ... until we put him in the ambulance," Benga said. "He said only 'Please take care of the cat.'" Close to getting frostbite, Duda is now receiving anti-inflammatory medication and blood circulation treatment, said Izabella Kiskasza, who runs a community center for Ukrainian refugees in Maramures and is assisting the duo. Peach received veterinary treatment in Baia Mare and is expected to fully recover.

Duda left his home in Ukraine's war-ravaged Kharkiv region more than a week before getting stranded with his feline companion in the arching Carpathian Mountain range, which straddles northern Romania and southwest Ukraine. While Peach is the first feline rescued from the mountainous Romanian region, Duda is just one of many Ukrainian men who have risked their lives traversing the harsh conditions of the mountains to avoid being drafted into their country's grinding war with Russia.

Since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, more than 160 Ukrainian men have been rescued from Romania's Maramures region and the numbers have doubled each year since, Benga said. Another 16 have been found dead. Two other Ukrainian drafted men were rescued by helicopter the same day as Duda, he said.

taken more than 30 military outposts, except the army's western command, which controls Rakhine and the southern part of neighboring Chin state, as well as the country's territorial waters in the Bay of Bengal. Recent fighting in Rakhine has raised fears of a revival of organized violence against members of the Muslim Rohingya minority, similar to that which drove at least 740,000 members of their community in 2017 to flee to neighboring Bangladesh for safety.

The Arakan Army, which is the military wing of the Buddhist Rakhine ethnic group in Rakhine state, where they are the majority and seek autonomy from Myanmar's central government, denies the allegations, though witnesses have described the group's actions to the AP and other media. Rohingyas have lived in Myanmar for generations, but they are widely regarded by many in the country's Buddhist majority, including members of the Rakhine minority, as having illegally migrated from Bangladesh.

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Syrian rebels can prove their doubters wrong

AMID the mountain of speculation and analysis that has followed the fall of Syria's Bashar Al Assad and the government he led, the human face of such abrupt and profound change resonates more deeply than geopolitical fallout. While there are very tangible concerns about the next period of time, the tumultuous sight of thousands of prisoners being freed, convoys of exiled Syrians returning home and the tearful reunions of families separated by once-frozen frontlines reflect an irrepressible will among the country's people to live.

This outpouring of emotion reflects the reality that many Syrians suffered from years of civil war and an incredibly heavy-handed state security apparatus. On the other hand, there are concerns of chaos and extremist groups seizing power and destroying what remains of the state. These are mistakes that the new authority taking shape in Damascus simply cannot afford to repeat. Behind the flag waving, speeches and celebrations, there is the unglamorous but vital business of making the country work again.

That means groups like Hayat Tahrir Al Sham ensuring that transport is restored and that schools and hospitals are open and functioning. HTS's experience as de-facto administrator of the province of Idlib has given it some basic understanding of the challenges of governance. The question now is whether it can learn productive lessons from that experience. There are many Syrians rightly fearful of a national administration led by a battle-hardened fighting force with its roots in the extremist ideology of Al Qaeda. So far, HTS has, to its credit, promised that lawlessness, disorder or mistreatment of Syria's minorities will not be tolerated. However, it is deeds not words that matter here. It remains to be seen whether the militants will be able to enforce their promises among their ranks.

The path to a better, stable future runs through managing the political and social mosaic that is Syria. The country is not just ethnically and religiously diverse, it also has a range of opinion the includes socialists, Islamists and those who were invested in the previous government's survival. Including these voices will be critical to building a state that can command the allegiance of all Syrians.

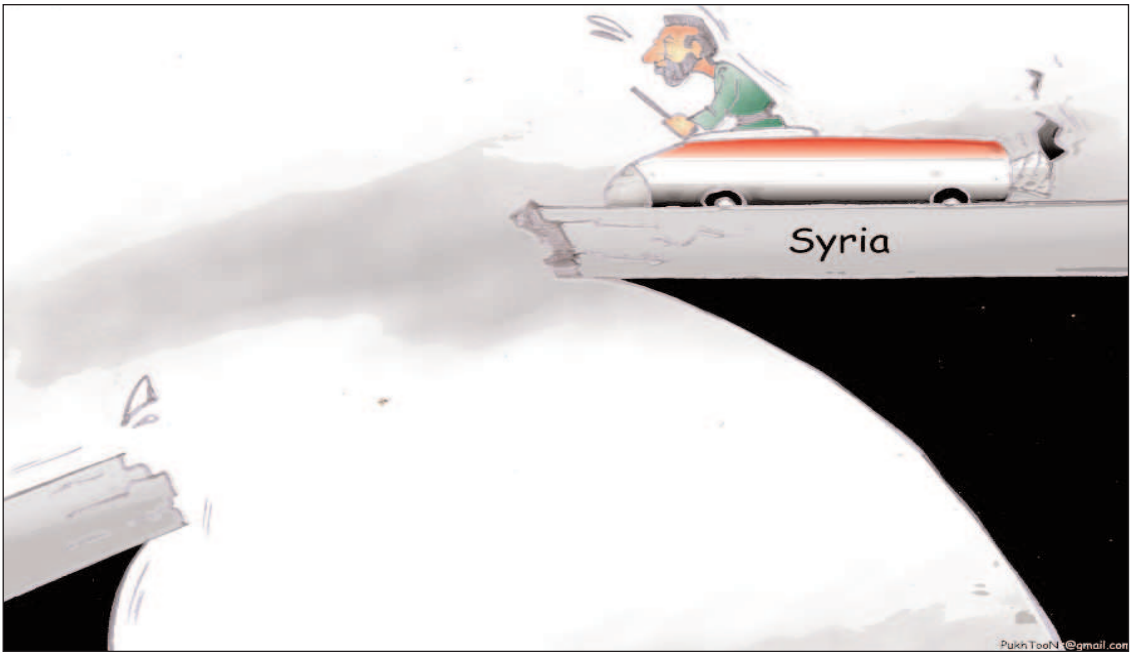
There are some welcome indications that this may be possible. Syria's rebel coalition seems set to try and revive a stalled UN-backed political process. Aymen Al Asmi, a representative of the Syrian opposition has told The National that a transitional governing body, according to UN Resolution 2254, will take over the administration of the country for up to 18 months. "In the meantime, work is being done to call for a national assembly to write a new constitution for the country and an electoral law to vote on the constitution," he added.

Such state-building is vital given that Syria is rife with problems that have compounded over the past decades. These have created several postponed crises that will not go away simply because there has been a change of power in Damascus. The country's would-be rulers must demonstrate leadership, accountability and a willingness to work in partnership with all sections of Syrian society. Most importantly, they must show that revenge or vigilantism will not be tolerated.

No-one should underestimate the scale of the challenge that lies ahead. Establishing a competent and stable administration is just the first step in building a new social contract in Syria. A longer-term political system will be needed, and much-needed healing among Syrians will rest on how they live, work and recover together from years of war and devastation.

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Reporting the reported: Content analysis of TV news channels for 2024

Faiza Qureshi

ELECTRONIC Media in Pakistan have developed into dynamic and influential entities by providing ground-breaking yet real-time coverage. According to Mr Zaffar Abbas, a senior journalist, "24-hour news coverage has changed the country's information landscape, and television has been instrumental in this". However, there has been a decline in people's trust in the news. Gallup Pakistan's 2023 report showed a 15% decline in media credibility compared to 2013. Several scholars have suggested that this erosion in credibility is a consequence of increased political coverage on news channels in a highly polarised media landscape. One research indicated this content bias, as respondents opined that 83.3% of the air time was consumed by political content. This insight presents a content analysis of 4 top-ranked news channels for the first quarter of 2024 to dissect this perception of loaded political coverage.

The study used a 'systematic sampling method', a research technique where every 15th item in the population is selected for inclusion. This method was chosen to ensure a representative sample of the news coverage. Under this method, coverage on the 15th day of the selected months was studied. The study excluded repeat telecasts. Only transmissions from 0900 hours to midnight, including news bulletins and talk shows, were studied. Furthermore, data were analysed using quantitative frequency analysis and frequency and percentage methods.

The TV News industry in Pakistan, primarily dominated by private news channels, operates within a capitalist system. This system often shapes content to cater to capitalistic preferences and retain audience engagement. However, during the first quarter of 2024, the major currents in the coverage remained limited to issues of general elections, political alliances and governance (mainly economy and legislation). On average, every news channel aired 24 main news items, out of which a staggering 49.72% of news items revolved around politics. This overwhelming dominance of political coverage left little space for other crucial issues (Figure 1). What's more alarming is that elements of sensationalism and subjectivity often overshadow the news landscape. A review of news coverage for the first quarter of 2024 proves this assertion, raising serious questions about the trustworthiness of the news we consume and the need for a more balanced and diverse news coverage.

The news channels during January mostly covered elections, discussing legal and political issues. On average, 62.9% of the total news content included matters related to general elections. Only 15.4% focused on governance and the economy. Additionally, the prime-time shows displayed a strong inclination towards political content, with four consecutive shows on every channel dedicating 100% of their airtime to the 'election symbol's' case in the Supreme Court, thereby escalating election hysteria. The coverage during February included marathon transmissions on election results, electoral rigging, and some special programs on post-election coalition making. On average, 72.92% of the news content covered elections and politics, whereas only 8.02% covered governance issues. Again, 100% of air time in current affairs programs was given to political discussion. The sentiment analysis of the coverage presented that the tone used in talk shows had a general tendency to instil despair and erode trust in national institutions. Such is attributed to a spike in the hard lead and subjectivity of analysis by the discussants, where 57.1% of the discussants followed a subjective analytical hard lead. Moreover, negative tendencies in coverage were found to peak in February, where more than half of the analysis displayed a negative tendency. Therefore, it would not be wrong to say that political hysteria and negative tendencies in the news concert together.

March witnessed a shift from politico-electoral discussions to governance. News coverage of politics declined by 30% and was 42.55%. This decline in political coverage in March offers a glimmer of hope for a more balanced news landscape. Notably, with the decrease in political coverage, there had been a steady increase in coverage of governance and international issues (Figure 2). Furthermore, there has been an 85% decline in direct political discussions in prime-time talk shows. Still, the persistence of political overtones in matters related to governance paved the way for negative tendencies in the news.

April witnessed a transition from the first quarter. Issues of governance and international politics overshadowed domestic politics, leaving its footprint at a mere 20.53% of the total coverage. Despite the decline in political coverage, negative tendencies in current affairs have remained high, which is attributed to the political overtone used by analysts. This asserts that the problem is content preference and presentation, where organisational ethical and regulatory codes must be drawn. In addition to sensational coverage, a unique feature of analytical framing was observed, where this study found that 39.37% of the news bulletin is an index of analysis over opinion rather than facts.

Additionally, while multiple studies have analysed the impact of audio-visuals and expressions in news reporting, this study has identified stark contextualisation of news. On April 15, 2024, a news story on the killing of Amir Tamba (the alleged killer of Indian spy Sarbjit Singh) was reported

by TV channels. One news channel presented the story within the international context of Indian state-sponsored offshore killings, whereas another channel framed it within the context of governance failures in Lahore. Such divergent and context-specific reporting generates confusion, fosters despondency, and diminishes trust in news, thereby exacerbating the existing information crisis. Furthermore, another question before the selected data set was, 'Does the news content cater to the public's information needs?' The answer was 'NO'. With immense power to shape opinions, the media must equally represent all segments vital to national development. In contrast, regrettably, a negligible 0.26% of the total news content covered IT, while similar trends were seen for arts, culture, tourism, heritage and allied subjects. For instance, January data shows that only 10% of news coverage is on these subjects. Moreover, their placement at the very end of the bulletin is generally not viewer-friendly.

In light of the above assertions, it would not be wrong to say that news media in Pakistan is architecting its demise, where lack of diversity and innovation is rotting its roots. In the words of Jon Stewart, 'media sells sensation because it hasn't tried anything else'. In the presence of many news stories, prioritising the sensational ones decapitates audiences' informed decision-making. Under such conditions, there is a clear need for a realistic content preference scheme that reflects accuracy and truthfulness and caters to the citizenry's information needs. There is an opportunity for positive change in the media landscape. As the prescribed action matrix states, this change can be brought about through concerted efforts by the regulator (PEMRA) and media houses.

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Landmines still kill thousands despite 27-year-old ban

Yossi Mekelberg

WHEN, in 1997, 142 countries voted at the UN General Assembly in favor of the Ottawa Treaty, which prohibits the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of antipersonnel mines, they did not expect that, 26 years later, in 2023, more than 5,757 people would still fall victim to landmines or explosive remnants of war. Among these, 1,983 were killed and 3,663 were hurt, many of them suffering life-changing injuries.

This horrendous statistic is not confined to events in current war zones, as incidents were recorded in more than 50 countries, of which 38 are states parties to the treaty. To add to the horror, up to 84 percent of all recorded casualties in 2023 were civilians and 37 percent of the civilian casualties were children.

Hence, last month's meeting of the Fifth Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention in Cambodia was timely, serving as a reminder that, despite much progress, there is an urgent need to press ahead with a global commitment to eradicate antipersonnel mines.

The landmine issue rose to international prominence the same year the Ottawa Treaty was signed, when Princess Diana visited places such as Angola and Bosnia to observe clearance activities firsthand and meet victims. Shortly after these visits, the treaty was signed, calling for all countries to unite to rid the world of landmines. But despite a significant reduction, we still live with this murderous phenomenon.

To be sure, 25 years ago, landmines killed or maimed more than 20,000 people annually — mostly civilians — and much of the improvement should be attributed to a majority of parties to the treaty complying with it. But progress does not mean linear progression toward the elimination of this issue. The Landmine and

young people, this means protracted disability and suffering, with dire personal and economic consequences.

Moreover, landmines do not come with a limited shelf life. Some of these explosives are more than half a century old and have been lying in wait all this time, as deadly today as the day they were planted. It makes them an ongoing threat, wreaking havoc on populations that are trying to rebuild their lives post-war.

Armies are tempted to use antipersonnel landmines because they terrorize both military personnel and civilians and leave a huge impact, in addition to being extremely cheap to make and distribute. Producing a landmine could cost as little as \$3. However, the cost of removing them safely is immense, especially if their locations are not mapped beforehand. The cost of safely removing a single mine in such circumstances has been estimated at \$1,000. Therefore, clearing all existing landmines around the world is projected to cost up to \$100 billion, while new landmines are still being planted in various war zones.

While clearing landmines is one side of the story, recovering from their impact is another. Cambodia, which hosted the Fifth Review Conference, is one of the countries that has been most affected by landmines, the result of 30 years of war and political disorder that came to an end in 1998. There are up to 6 million mines or unexploded munitions littering the country, holding back its recovery, rehabilitation and economic development, in addition to the psychological impact.

Hence, the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention is not only about stopping the production and use of mines, it also requires states to help the hundreds of thousands of landmine victims with their rehabilitation. Since

Antipersonnel mines, like cluster bombs, are a particularly nasty weapon that have a lasting impact on victims and their families and communities. By their very design, landmines are inherently indiscriminate weapons — they are not intended to target a specific person, but rather hurt those who belong to a certain nationality or ethnic group and terrorize the rest of their communities. Hence, injury can be inflicted on whoever triggers the mine, no matter whether that is a child or a soldier, as well as anybody who happens to be in close proximity. What makes this munition particularly nasty is that it has lifelong consequences on the victims and their families. If it does not kill, the injuries inflicted, including losing limbs, are so severe that the victim will likely require lifelong care. And since they disproportionately affect young people, this means protracted disability and suffering, with dire personal and economic consequences. Moreover, landmines do not come with a limited shelf life. Some of these explosives are more than half a century old and have been lying in wait all this time, as deadly today as the day they were planted.

Cluster Munition Monitor group claimed last month that Russia had been using antipersonnel mines "extensively" in Ukraine and that the US responded by providing Kyiv with its own mines to try and stall Russian progress on the battlefield. Hence, despite 164 countries now having adopted the treaty, further steps are needed to push us toward a world free of antipersonnel mines and the casualties they cause.

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most of the victims are in developing countries, where access to health and rehabilitation facilities is more limited, the majority of the costs should be borne by more affluent countries — and, in many cases, these are where these vicious weapons have been produced.

Sadly, while progress has been made on limiting the use of mines, victim assistance is one of the areas in which progress has been sluggish. Bear in mind that many of the victims of landmines reside in remote rural areas, where there is a huge shortage of specialist medical treatment and rehabilitation, not to mention a lack of investment in access to schools, workplaces and at home, as well as psychological support. It is tragic enough to get injured by a mine, but to condemn the victims to being unable to fulfill their human potential due to a lack of resources is unforgivable.

And while the need to reduce the proliferation of landmines and to support those who fall victim to them is paramount, we must not forget the many thousands who risk their lives every day in the dangerous and nerve-racking activity of removing these landmines.

They also need recognition and, above all, the resources to guarantee their safety.

The sources of Japanese resilience

Chris Patten

I first visited Japan as a young member of the UK Parliament in the early 1980s. Yukio Satoh, an ambitious and forward-thinking diplomat who would later serve as Japan's ambassador to the UN, had recently been posted to the country's London embassy. Recognizing that the political dialogue between the UK and Japan was dominated by an older generation, Satoh sought to foster connections with a younger cohort of British politicians.

To this end, Satoh invited several newly elected MPs, including me, to visit Japan and engage with our Japanese counterparts. Our fortnight-long trip included a weekend in the constituency of a Diet (Japanese parliament) member. My host's constituency was centered on the spa town of Hanamaki, famous for its noodles.

That visit sparked my long-standing enthusiasm for Japan, which led me to return dozens of times over the years, in various capacities: MP, Cabinet minister, last British governor of Hong Kong and European commissioner for external relations.

More recently, I visited Japan as an international adviser to the Praemium Imperiale, a prestigious

award commemorating the centennial of the Japan Art Association's founding. Established under the patronage of the Japanese imperial family and supported by a generous commercial grant, it has been likened to a Nobel Prize for the arts.

The Praemium Imperiale is an essential component of Japan's soft power. Over its 35-year history, it has been awarded to celebrated artists and architects from Japan and around the world. Japan's contributions to the visual arts, film and architecture have left a lasting impression on me. But for many, the most impressive thing about the country is its extraordinary economic success.

Japan's postwar boom is often described as an "economic miracle." While I am skeptical of this term, there is no denying that the country experienced a remarkable transformation between the late 1950s and the 1990s. This can be attributed to several key factors: relative political stability, effective policy-making and substantial investments in education, job training and public health, as well as the ability to capitalize on opportunities created by increasingly globalized markets. I witnessed these dynamics first-

hand during my tenure as governor of Hong Kong.

To be sure, the miracle did not last. After decades of rapid gross domestic product growth, especially between 1973 and 1991, the country entered a prolonged period of economic stagnation and deflation, often referred to as the "lost decades."

Japan's post-1990 economic stagnation was triggered by efforts to cool an overheated property sector through interest rate hikes and a strong yen policy intended to address US trade concerns. These measures were largely a result of the 1985 Plaza Accord, which boosted the yen's value and undermined the competitiveness of Japanese exports.

Given his threats to launch a trade war, US President-elect Donald Trump's second term potentially poses the most serious challenge to Japan's economic resilience in decades. One can only hope that Japanese policymakers confront Trump's proposed protectionist tariffs with the same resolve their predecessors demonstrated in countering Ronald Reagan's trade restrictions and currency manipulation.

Fortunately, Japan finds itself in a relatively strong position, with recent data

underscoring its remarkable resilience in the face of the twin shocks of the COVID-19 pandemic and the global energy crisis. Admittedly, economic growth is slowing once again — the International Monetary Fund projects GDP to rise by just 0.3 percent in 2024, down from 1.7 percent in 2023 — and Japan has been overtaken by Germany as the world's third-largest economy. But it remains a prosperous country with an exceptionally high life expectancy.

A visit to Japan reveals the source of its resilience: a strong democratic society firmly rooted in the rule of law. But what impresses me most is the country's ability to navigate the tension between identity politics and globalization without succumbing to the divisiveness that currently plagues many other liberal democracies.

While Japan faces several daunting challenges — not least a rapidly aging and shrinking population — it retains a profound sense of national identity that seems to grow stronger, not weaker, in an increasingly interconnected world. Its self-assurance has endured the pressures of a globalized economy, which is why I am confident that it can weather whatever storms the future may hold.

Seeing Gaza from Berlin

“NOW you have a big family that is always by your side,” my Palestinian friend Nathmi Abushedeq wrote to me in September after I helped him with a personal matter.

On October 26, almost half of my new “big Palestinian family” in Beit Lahiya, in northern Gaza, fell victim to Israeli bombs. Twenty-eight people were recovered dead, and many remained under the rubble.

The distant suffering feels close

I had met the Abushedeqs for the first time in March, after crying incessantly for months over the dystopian news and images from Gaza. To help alleviate my feelings of helplessness, I volunteered to collect medical supplies for Nathmi in Berlin, which he would later transport to Gaza.

I met Nathmi’s brother Ashraf and his cousin Weam, who had been living in Berlin for eight months. Compared to their calmness, my despair felt almost ridiculous. They are from northern Gaza, I learned from Weam.

Images from social media and international media flooded my mind: a sea of white body bags, mutilated bodies, blocked aid deliveries, hunger – people drinking salt water, eating animal feed and grass. Dogs eating human corpses. Starved children emaciated to the bone.

Weam told me that his family, including his wife and three small children, were sheltering in a school in Beit Lahiya. I felt helpless, searching for words of comfort. Weam smiled gently and said, “Alhamdulillah for everything”—praise be to God for everything.

Alhamdulillah – this phrase concluded most of our conversations throughout the day. As Muslims, we believe that everything comes from God and has a purpose, even if we don’t understand it at the moment. God plans for the long term and always for our benefit.

We got to work, joking from time to time. My heart felt a bit lighter. I sensed the resilience often attributed to Palestinians, and I allowed myself to be

uplifted by it.

The Palestinian poet Rafeef Ziadah wrote:

“We Palestinians teach life after they have occupied the last sky. We teach life after they have built their settlements and apartheid walls, after the last skies ... We Palestinians wake up every morning to teach the rest of the world life, sir!”

Into the late evening hours, we transported donations through the city and talked. Our mood resembled a roller coaster – with loops. Weam spoke about life in Gaza and here in Germany, and we joked repeatedly, supporting each other. He and Ashraf showed me photos of their wives and children, bombed houses, and exhausted relatives.

Ashraf had a phone call with his wife and small children, who had taken refuge in Rafah. It sounded painfully normal – as if Dad was just on a business trip. Living under bombs had become a norm in Gaza. The men had endured six wars in their lifetimes.

Ashraf told me that his children had chicken that day—for the first time since the beginning of this aggression. My heart sank again. Was it their only meal of the day? Were they also living on just 200 calories a day like so many people in Gaza? Were they cold at night? How many dead and mutilated people had they already seen?

“Alhamdulillah. May they always have enough to eat,” I said.

Weam talked a lot about his father, a man who had built a business in Gaza. When he said goodbye to him before going to Europe, he saw him cry for the first time. Yet his father, sad and at the same time determined, sent him through Greece to Germany. Life in Gaza had become too difficult – they agreed on that. Neither father nor son suspected at the time how much hostility and repression Palestinians would experience in Germany after October 7.

Two months passed after our first meeting. One day, I stopped by Nathmi’s, where I found him and his relatives preparing food. Weam greeted me somewhat reservedly. “They got his father,” Nathmi explained.

Emina Hodic

He had been killed three days earlier. I stammered a few words that seemed inadequate.

“Alhamdulillah,” replied Weam, tears in his eyes. The family wanted to spend the day together.

In the car, I also burst into tears. Nathmi had already told me earlier that they had lost many family members. How did they endure all of this? What had they done to deserve all this apocalyptic suffering?

Police violence against Palestinians

For months now, police brutality against Palestinians and solidarity activists has gone unchecked. German society has largely ignored it, just like it has the reasons for the protests.

I have attended only authorised demonstrations and adhered to all known regulations. Nevertheless, I have constantly feared for my safety. Where could I put my grief and anger? Was there any space for it in this country?

I have repeatedly observed at demonstrations how the police would violently storm the crowd. Sometimes it would be because some people had shouted prohibited slogans, like “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free”. Other times, there would be no reason. The police would pull people from the crowd and later let them go, unable to prove that they had committed a criminal act.

At none of the protests I have attended have I witnessed violence coming from the demonstrators. It particularly pains me to see police officers brutally attacking Palestinians while they peacefully express their despair over the horrors in Gaza. How many of them were also mourning killed family members at the protests?

Amnesty Germany has repeatedly drawn attention to the disproportionate and racist police violence against peaceful Palestinian solidarity demonstrators and demanded independent investigations. “Peaceful demonstrators of Muslim and Arab descent and their supporters are subjected to disproportionate police measures,” one statement warns.

The countless disturbing experiences I have had with the police at demonstrations – along with the ongoing blanket criminalisation of all demonstrators – ultimately led me to seek other forms of solidarity, away from the streets.

The Hamas attack on October 7, 2023 was traumatic for Israeli society. Innocent lives were lost, and they are rightly mourned here, in Germany.

The Israeli war on Gaza has now been ongoing for 14 months, killing and maiming indiscriminately and erasing Gaza before our eyes. But German society has looked away, with few exceptions. Throughout my life, I had predominantly ethnic German friends. Today, there are very few. Even before October 7, 2023, the disregard for Palestinian suffering – the displacement, the disenfranchisement, the racism, the apartheid – hurt me.

With the onset of the war on Gaza, I distanced myself from all those who wanted to lecture me from the traditionally one-sided German perspective. I did not have the strength to fight against this position in my personal environment. I was born in Bosnia, and the trauma of the ignored genocide against my people runs deep. Gaza pushed me to the limit of what I can endure and comprehend. I see history repeating itself, with a far greater intensity. It is now being livestreamed on our phones and yet it is still being ignored.

Our federal government has actively supported the destruction of Palestinian lives with arms shipments. And I myself have to fear that every word I say against this will be interpreted or even condemned as anti-Semitic or incitement to hatred.

Artists have been cancelled and numerous journalists have lost their jobs. Academics, politicians, employees—anyone who shows solidarity with Palestinians risks their reputation, livelihood, and even a criminal record.

One member of the Bundestag or parliament, Aydan Ozoguz, had to apologise last month for sharing a post from Jewish Voice for Peace

that featured an image of the Israeli bombing of Al-Aqsa Hospital compound in which at least five people were killed and 70 injured.

The post had caused outrage in Germany.

But where was the outrage for the Palestinians who burned alive in this fire? Nineteen-year-old Shaban died in the flames still hooked up to an IV, but Germany chose to persecute those who tried to draw attention to his horrific death.

It is not just me who is staying away from ethnic Germans. A friend, who has been ostracised by her circle for speaking up for Gaza, has recently learned that her daughter’s teacher was told the girl needs special attention because the mother was supposedly “very unstable” at the moment.

These are just a few of countless examples that have psychologically paralysed me over the past year. And at this point – 14 months into what genocide scholars, human rights organisations and the United Nations all describe as genocide – it doesn’t matter whether the great silence in Germany arises from fear, convenience, or ignorance. Anyone who had gaps in their education has had enough time to inform themselves. In light of the unprecedented destruction and dehumanisation in Gaza, excuses, any selective humanity, and any cowardice are unacceptable.

I saw a video of the funeral of the Abushedeq family members. Their bodies, wrapped in blankets, were hastily placed in a mass grave amid the rubble. I cried all day. There was no compassion from the German society for Nathmi as he mourned.

Although I have never met the Abushedeqs who are in Gaza, I feel connected to them – a closeness that I can hardly imagine in Germany anymore. It feels as though I have never truly known this country.

I see profound humanity in devastated Gaza, where death is omnipresent. For me, it has become more of a home than the country I have lived in for over 30 years. I never thought I would feel so alienated, unwanted, and persecuted in Germany.

It is time for justice and accountability in Syria

Samer Abboud

THE Syrian regime has collapsed. President Bashar al-Assad has left the country and the Syrians are jubilant. Images of Syrians liberated from the torturous prisons that instilled fear for decades have given hope to many that their country is finally free from oppression.

For years now, Syrians have envisioned what their country would look like once the regime has collapsed. That day has come, and shaping the future of Syria is now a new terrain of contestation, hopefully a productive one.

It is far too early to be making declarations about what will happen next in Syria. There is room for both optimism and cynicism in the coming weeks and months. Syrians will be coming to terms with the tragedy of

conciliation mechanisms within the transition process.

This process should also try to address the question of restitution. One part of the regime’s conflict management strategies was to rob people of their properties and to transfer ownership to loyalists. As refugees and internally displaced people return, many will likely find their homes or properties occupied or claimed by others.

That is why, the new authorities will have to establish clear mechanisms for determining ownership to avoid tensions. This would involve finding mechanisms to resolve cases where documentation is missing and to determine which decisions by the previous authorities should be recognised and which should not be.

There are also many

It is far too early to be making declarations about what will happen next in Syria. There is room for both optimism and cynicism in the coming weeks and months. Syrians will be coming to terms with the tragedy of the last 13 years of war and 54 years of al-Assad family rule. At the same time, they will be establishing a transition process that lays the foundation for a new political system. In doing so, Syria’s citizens and their transition leaders will be facing difficult questions about the future of the country. None are more important than how to seek accountability, justice, and restitution. Inevitably, how the future Syrian political leaders choose to approach these will reflect how the conflict is narrated and whether true reconciliation among Syrians will take place. Although it is early to judge what form this process will take, Syria will most likely avoid following the Lebanese model. In the aftermath of Lebanon’s civil war, Lebanon’s leaders pursued a project of official amnesia where the war was narrated as caused by outside powers meddling in Lebanese affairs. Apart from Samir Geagea’s imprisonment, all the civil war’s militia leaders avoided any accountability for their actions during the war. In fact, many of them, such as Nabih Berri and Walid Jumblatt, remain members of parliament to this day. The project of official amnesia absolved Lebanon’s militia leaders of responsibility for the war. Lebanese citizens were expected to continue their lives without seeking justice and closure. Syria will no doubt be different as its new leaders are not simply recycled from the country’s past. There is a strong desire to hold Syria’s former regime officials accountable for the conflict through some judicial process. The challenge will be in balancing justice and accountability, on the one hand, and the inevitable demands for revenge, on the other. Any reconciliation process in Syria needs to account for this balancing act to ensure that the mechanisms of justice reflect reconciliation. The recent amnesty extended by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham to conscripted soldiers suggests that the transition authorities will only target high-ranking officials within the military and regime for prosecution. This bodes well for any domestically driven reconciliation process, as it distinguishes between the regime’s decision-makers and everyday citizens who were a part of the army and bureaucracy. We have seen how trials of former Syrian prison officials in Germany bring closure to many Syrians who simply wanted justice for the harm inflicted on them, their families, and their country. These forms of accountability can now be pursued inside the country, using Syrian legal and political mechanisms. This would necessitate new domestic laws to be passed and national tribunals to be set up. At the same time, Syria’s transition leaders will be under immense pressure to accept international support to alleviate sanctions.

Voluntary carbon market has failed the human rights test

ONE of the most salient decisions of last month’s climate summit in Baku was to create a new international carbon market, bringing nearly a decade of negotiations to a close. As leaders of two international human rights organisations, SOMO and Human Rights Watch, we’ve overseen in-depth investigations into major carbon projects implicated in human rights abuses, and we’re sounding the alarm on the risk that increased carbon trades may harm people further.

Carbon credits are supposed to stand for greenhouse gas emissions that were avoided, reduced or removed, for example through projects that prevent deforestation or plant trees. Governments, companies, and even individuals may purchase these credits to compensate for, or “offset,” their emissions. When purchases are made voluntarily, the sum of these commercial exchanges is called the “voluntary” carbon market.

For the past three years, a steady stream of investigations has exposed deceptive practices. High-profile projects have greatly exaggerated their climate benefits and defrauded investors. The evidence against offsetting has piled on so high that the Science-Based Targets Initiative, a United Nations-backed scheme that assists private companies in setting pollution reduction goals, ruled out offsetting as a valid method for meeting said goals.

The offsetting industry has fought back with a marketing campaign aiming to persuade customers and governments that its product is of “high integrity”. Methodologies to measure climate benefits

have been revised to attempt to repair the credibility of the system. But there is a human rights-shaped hole in their efforts.

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Indeed, our organisations’ research showed that carbon projects can badly harm the communities they claim to benefit, and the voluntary carbon market’s largest player has been unable to ensure redress or a remedy for victims.

In Kenya, SOMO and the Kenya Human Rights Commission reported in 2023 on widespread sexual harassment and abuse by senior male staff members and rangers at the Kasigau Corridor REDD+ Project, a 200,000-hectare (494,000-acre) nature conservation initiative affecting 360,000 people.

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In Cambodia, a Human Rights Watch report released in 2024 detailed that several Chong Indigenous residents were forcibly evicted from their customary farmland and harassed by rangers for collecting forest products at the Southern Cardamom

Tirana Hassan and Audrey Gaughran

REDD+ Project, a nearly half-million-hectare (1.2-million-acre) forest protection project affecting 16,000 people. Officials involved in the project denied any wrongdoing. Together, these projects

Our organisations uncovered, Verra suspended Kasigau and Southern Cardamom for several months, stymying their ability to issue new carbon credits during this period. Then Verra reinstated both projects, saying that they had taken “required actions to address all alleged harm” and “mitigate the risk of future harm.” We found, however, that the review was sorely lacking. Verra conducted a desk-based “review” of the issues we raised, and the answers provided by the projects appear to have been accepted at face value. Verra did not visit the projects or speak to the women and men who claimed their lives were harmed by the Kasigau and Southern Cardamom projects.

In one case, an Indigenous resident described to HRW an encounter with a ranger patrol while he was collecting forest products, a lawful activity in Cambodia that does not violate Verra’s standards. “When they first rushed into the camp they hit me in the back with their gun,” he said. “They destroyed everything I had

with me – even the clothes on my back. All I was left with was my underwear.” Verra ordered the Southern Cardamom project to hold accountable rangers implicated in human rights abuses. But when the project responded that it had “not identified any staff misconduct,” there was no further interrogation despite the seriousness of the allegations. While Verra ordered that the projects create safeguards and training programmes as a pre-condition for being reinstated, there was no on-site verification process before Verra lifted the suspension. Further, Verra recently stated that it “cannot require project proponents to compensate for breaches of any safeguarding requirements” – so, for instance, Verra would not require projects to compensate Indigenous people who have been forcibly dispossessed of their land.

Among major industry players in the carbon market, Verra is positioning itself as a key actor that can guide the global expansion on the back of the COP29 agreement while driving “finance to vulnerable communities.” Yet, our experience shows that Verra’s practice is to leave human rights violations unaddressed, which has left affected communities even more vulnerable.

— Al Jazeera

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Verra, and other similar bodies, have set themselves up as guarantors of integrity on carbon offset projects. However, the processes at Kasigau and Southern Cardamom reveal a deeply flawed system.

Instead of delivering accountability, human rights abuses are compounded by complaints review processes that ignore the community members reporting harm.

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the last 13 years of war and 54 years of al-Assad family rule. At the same time, they will be establishing a transition process that lays the foundation for a new political system.

In doing so, Syria’s citizens and their transition leaders will be facing difficult questions about the future of the country. None are more important than how to seek accountability, justice, and restitution. Inevitably, how the future Syrian political leaders choose to approach these will reflect how the conflict is narrated and whether true reconciliation among Syrians will take place.

Although it is early to judge what form this process will take, Syria will most likely avoid following the Lebanese model. In the aftermath of Lebanon’s civil war, Lebanon’s leaders pursued a project of official amnesia where the war was narrated as caused by outside powers meddling in Lebanese affairs. Apart from Samir Geagea’s imprisonment, all the civil war’s militia leaders avoided any accountability for their actions during the war. In fact, many of them, such as Nabih Berri and Walid Jumblatt, remain members of parliament to this day.

The project of official amnesia absolved Lebanon’s militia leaders of responsibility for the war. Lebanese citizens were expected to continue their lives without seeking justice and closure.

Syria will no doubt be different as its new leaders are not simply recycled from the country’s past. There is a strong desire to hold Syria’s former regime officials accountable for the conflict through some judicial process. The challenge will be in balancing justice and accountability, on the one hand, and the inevitable demands for revenge, on the other. Any reconciliation process in Syria needs to account for this balancing act to ensure that the mechanisms of justice reflect reconciliation. The recent amnesty extended by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham to conscripted soldiers suggests that the transition authorities will only target high-ranking officials within the military and regime for prosecution. This bodes well for any domestically driven reconciliation process, as it distinguishes between the regime’s decision-makers and everyday citizens who were a part of the army and bureaucracy. We have seen how trials of former Syrian prison officials in Germany bring closure to many Syrians who simply wanted justice for the harm inflicted on them, their families, and their country. These forms of accountability can now be pursued inside the country, using Syrian legal and political mechanisms. This would necessitate new domestic laws to be passed and national tribunals to be set up. At the same time, Syria’s transition leaders will be under immense pressure to accept international support to alleviate sanctions.

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At the same time, Syria’s transition leaders will be under immense pressure to accept international support to alleviate sanctions. This will come with a heavy price that could include international control over the reconciliation process.

We have seen that in the post-Cold War period internationally driven reconciliation processes often demand that countries in transition adopt the language and norms of the United Nations. This has created all sorts of problems in places like the former Yugoslavia or Rwanda where external intervention shaped how the reconciliation process unfolded.

International involvement may weaken Syrian citizens’ emotional investment in reconciliation. Syria, therefore, should seek to construct a transition and reconciliation process outside of the oversight of the UN and other international actors by embedding reconciliation mechanisms within the transition process.

Syrian refugees who were stripped of their rights and were unable to pass citizenship to their children as the previous regime did not recognise any documentation not issued by its own authorities. This problem will also have to be addressed.

Another aspect of restitution is compensation for losses that civilians have sustained during the war. Many homes have been destroyed and looted and there is inconsistent access to key services, such as electricity. Infrastructure in many places has been decimated. There is so much destruction that compensation and reconstruction will be difficult to tackle, especially as the Israeli occupation in the south expands and Israeli bombardment continues.

How Syria’s new leaders account for the bureaucratic mess and reconstruction challenges will largely determine how people interpret the transition process.

We know from several other post-conflict or post-authoritarian cases that conflicts continue in people’s memories and stories. Syria will be no different. Whatever reconciliation and accountability path is pursued will lead to frustration among some Syrians. This is certain. Any mechanisms of accountability will thus need to be expansive and inclusionary and reflect the diversity of the Syrian experience of conflict since 2011.

The process will be arduous to be sure and it is an issue Syrians will be grappling with for years to come.



SCCI calls for setup of business to business contact to boost Pak-US trade ties

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Fazal Moqem Khan stressed the need for establishment of business to business contacts to enhance bilateral trade economic relations between Pakistan and US.

Addressing members during the visit of US Consul General in Peshawar Shante Moore at the chamber house on Tuesday, Moqem said KP is a lucrative destination for foreign investment.

He said KP province has been blessed with an abundance of oil, gas, hydel power generation and mineral resources and invited American companies to invest in these potentials through joint ventures.

Meeting was attended by SCCI senior vice president Abdul Jalil Jan, vice president Shehryar Khan, for-

mer presidents Fuad Ishaq, Faiz Muhammad Faizi, former senior vice presidents Imran Khan Mohmand, Shahid Hussain, members of the executive committee Hassan Zahideen, Adnan Nasir, Mujeeb Rehman, Saifullah Khan, Saddam Hussain, Abbas Fuad Azeem, Gul Zaman, Shams ur Rahim, Ziaul Haq Sarhadi, and Mazhar ul Haq, Atif Rasheed Khajawa, Monawar Khurshid, Saddam Gul, Faiz Rasool, Fazal e Wahid, Qurat Ul Ain, Ishfaq Ahmad, Arshad Iqbal Siddique, Ihsanullah, Affaf Ali Khan, Feroz Shah, Secretary General Muqtasid Ahsan, and traders from furniture sector, exporters and traders leaders.

Shante Moore while speaking on the occasion said his country is keen to further strengthen commercial relations and partnership.

He especially mentioned

that the US is proactively working for socio-economic development and prosperity of KP merged districts through launch of joint collaboration and various projects.

The US diplomat vowed to continue collaboration with SCCI to strengthen mutual trade and economic relations by bringing business communities of the both countries closer to each other and initiating joint ventures.

Earlier, Fazal Moqem enlightened the participants about investment opportunities for foreign investment in KP.

He mentioned prospects for enhancing mutual trade and economic relations between Pakistan/KP and US are brighter.

The SCCI chief called upon US Companies to make investment in hydel power generation, oil, gas, mining, honey, marble, fur-

niture and other potential sectors of K-P that will help to strengthen the bilateral economic and commercial relations between the countries.

Replying to various queries, US Consul General said his country is taking pragmatic steps for economic development and prosperity of KP, especially its merged districts.

He said special programs were launched for young man and women skill development and economic empowerment, infrastructure, health, education improvement in merged districts.

Shante Moore reiterated his firm resolve to jointly work with SCCI for economic prosperity and development of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly establishment of business to business linkages to enhance commercial and economic ties.



PESHAWAR: President SCCI Fazal Moqem Khan, senior vice president Abdul Jalil Jan and vice president Shehryar Khan presenting Chamber's Shield to US Consul General Shante Moore.

PSX turns bearish, loses 1,073 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to bearish trend on Tuesday, losing 1,073.74 more points, a negative change of 0.98 percent, closing at 108,896.65 points as compared to 109,970.39 points on the last trading day.

A total of 1,548,302,320 shares were traded during the day as compared to 1,597,868,204 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs68.805 billion against Rs60.251 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 469 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 106 of them recorded gains and 329 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 34 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 200,870,859 shares at Rs1.66 per share, Cnergyco PK with 150,687,962 shares at Rs6.94 per share and K-Electric with 73,030,711 shares at Rs5.91 per share.

Khyber Textile Mills Limited witnessed a maxi-

mum increase of Rs51.61 per share price, closing at Rs631.88, whereas the runner-up was Attock Refinery Limited with Rs46.97 rise in its per share price to Rs588.20.

Unilerver Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs362.95 per share closing at Rs20,330.55 followed by Hoechst Pakistan Limited with Rs123.13 decline to close at Rs2,653.09.

Ruppee sheds 08 piasa against dollar

Pakistani rupee on Tuesday depreciated by 08 piasa against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs278.05 against the previous day's closing of Rs277.97.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs277.60 and Rs279.10 respectively.

The price of Euro decreased by 46 piasa to close at Rs293.20 against the last day's closing of Rs293.66, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese yen came down by 01 piasa and

closed at Rs1.83, whereas a decrease of 52 piasa was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs354.30 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs354.82.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 02 and 01 piasa to close at Rs75.70 and Rs74.00, respectively.

Gold prices increase by Rs1000 per tola

The price of 24 karat per tola gold witnessed an increase of Rs1,000 and was sold at Rs277,400 on Tuesday against its sale at Rs276,400 on previous trading day. All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs858 to Rs237,826 from Rs236,698 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat also went up to Rs218,007 from Rs217,221.

Per tola and ten gram silver were also traded at same rate at Rs3,400 and Rs2,914.95, respectively.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$10 to \$2,662 from \$2,652, Association reported.

Nishat's first outlet store to open at IMARAT's Amazon Mall



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Amazon Mall, Pakistan's premier retail destination located on the G.T. Road, Islamabad, proudly announces the opening of Nishat's first ever outlet store. This collaboration brings a groundbreaking shopping experience by combining timeless elegance with modern fashion, catering to a diverse range of customers.

As the country's first-ever factory outlet mall, Amazon Mall offers year-round sales on high-quality brand items, attracting top national and international names to its vibrant retail landscape. Nishat's new outlet store aligns perfectly with the mall's mission of providing customers with unparalleled choices at competitive prices.

Nishat is setting new standards with its mixed-model outlet store, where shoppers can enjoy the best of both worlds-factory outlet articles at reduced prices alongside the latest new arrivals. This unique offering ensures customers have access to exclusive deals and fresh collections, making every visit a delightful experience.

Known for blending the vibrant colors of the East with contemporary styles, Nishat is a fashion powerhouse and one of Pakistan's largest clothing brands. Its new outlet at Amazon Mall showcases signature collections that reflect craftsmanship, innovation, and a deep connection to cultural heritage.

Shafiq Akbar, Chairman of IMARAT Group, shared

his thoughts on this milestone:

"The addition of Nishat to Amazon Mall underscores our vision of creating spaces that inspire and elevate the shopping experience. By hosting Pakistan's top brands in an inclusive and accessible environment, we aim to set new benchmarks in the retail industry while empowering local talent and innovation."

IMARAT representative Mr. Aqeel Tariq expressed his enthusiasm for this venture, stating: "It's an honor to be part of such a visionary project. Amazon Mall provides a unique platform for brands like Nishat to connect with a diverse audience and offer them an unparalleled shopping experience that combines affordability and

quality."

Amazon Mall has established itself as a unique destination in the twin cities, offering a dynamic mix of retail, dining, and entertainment options. As a factory outlet mall with year-round sales and discounted items, it caters to the needs of price-conscious shoppers without compromising on quality.

The opening of Nishat's outlet marks yet another achievement for Amazon Mall, further solidifying its reputation as Islamabad's go-to shopping destination. With a vibrant lineup of top-tier national and international brands, the mall continues to redefine the retail landscape of Pakistan.

As IMARAT Group leads the way in innovative real estate development, its projects like Amazon Mall not only attract significant investment but also contribute to Pakistan's economic growth by creating job opportunities and fostering a culture of excellence. With Nishat's mixed-model outlet now part of Amazon Mall's portfolio, shoppers can look forward to a seamless blend of affordability and trend-setting fashion.

Amazon Mall welcomes you to experience shopping like never before-a place where style meets affordability, and every visit feels extraordinary.



CHENDUE SICHUAN, China: President Pakistan China Friendship Association Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Yousuf Ayub Khan presenting souvenir to president Sichuan People's Association for SIFA Liu Quan Sheng during 2024 Sichuan Belt and Road International People to People Friendship Organization's Meeting. Secretary General PCFA also present on occasion.

Hong Kong, Shanghai rally on China optimism

HONG KONG (AFP/ APP): Hong Kong and Shanghai stocks rallied Tuesday after China pledged to adopt a looser monetary policy to revive the stuttering economy, while Seoul rebounded after days of losses fuelled by the brief declaration of martial law by South Korea's president.

In the latest bid to kickstart growth, President Xi Jinping and other top leaders announced their first major shift in policy for more than a decade, saying they would

"implement a more active fiscal policy and an appropriately relaxed" strategy.

The remarks, reported by state news agency Xinhua on Monday, represented a move away from their previous "prudent" approach, sparking hopes for more rate cuts and the freeing-up of more cash for lending.

The announcement comes as Beijing contemplates Donald Trump's second term in the White House. The president-elect has indicated he will reignite his hardball trade

policies, fuelling fears of another standoff between the superpowers.

Leaders have battled for almost two years to kickstart the world's number two economy, which has been battered by weak domestic consumption and a debilitating property sector crisis.

"Beijing kept its stimulus measures very modest in 2024, because the goal was to stabilise the economy and rehabilitate confidence. And as a result, China reserved its firepower for an uncertain

2025," Shehzad Qazi, managing director of consultancy China Beige Book, said in a commentary.

"Now, Beijing is almost singularly focused on protecting China from the onslaught of forthcoming Trump tariffs."

Hong Kong stocks surged more than three percent at Tuesday's open, extending a rally of 2.8 percent Monday. Shanghai, which had closed before the news, gained more than two percent in early trade Tuesday.



KARACHI: Senior officials from Hashoo Group and Global Palace during a signing ceremony held at Pearl-Continental Hotel.

The future in focus

Syed Ali Nawaz Gilani

China's diplomatic approach is deeply rooted in peace, mutual respect and the belief in shared prosperity. For decades, the country has pursued a foreign policy of non-alignment affairs, preserve sovereignty and enhance mutually beneficial partnerships. Launched a decade ago as a bold testament to China's commitment to global cooperation, BRI provides a way for countries to strengthen their ties, engage in common development and tackle complex challenges together in an increasingly interconnected world. It does not disappear.

The 2024 meeting of the Sichuan Belt and Road International People-to-People Friendship Organizations, organized by the China International Friendship Association,

assembled a diverse array of countries from all around the world. About 130 representatives from 19 global organizations across 15 countries convened in Sichuan, China, for a significant event honoring the region's cultural heritage, economic potential, and collective aspirations for global unity. The meetings combined cultural exchange, economic dialogues and youth involvement to strengthen global cooperation. Exhibitions on Sichuan's history and assets showcased the province's cultural richness and economic vibrancy, while discussions covered topics such as mutual understanding, sustainable development and the promotion of youth exchange. The gathering emphasized teamwork aimed to overcome cultural differences to create a better, more connected global community.

The event attracted a spectrum of prestigious organizations, including Anglo-China Understanding, Irish Asia Matters, the 48 Group Club, Association at Antique Nantes-China, and the Pakistan-China Friendship Associations, to name just a few. Also in attendance were influential foreign business representatives, underscoring the multifaceted nature of the dialogue that was about to unfold - one that spanned not only culture and history but also trade, youth, and the future of global cooperation.

As visitors from various parts of the world interacted and shared ideas, they enjoyed a range of fascinating exhibitions highlighting Sichuan's cultural legacy and economic strength. The "Beautiful Sichuan" and "Charming Sichuan" Intangible Cultural Heritage exhibitions vividly illustrate the province's

rich, extensive history - a narrative that extends over thousands of years, immersed in tradition and artistry.

More than just a presentation of art and commerce, these exhibits offered attendees an opportunity to engage directly with Sichuan's cultural and economic identity. As one of the foreign entrepreneurs put it, "What we're witnessing here is not just a display of products, but the living spirit of Sichuan - a microcosm of China's dynamic future."

The heart of the event lay in the spirited dialogue that took place, where Chinese and international delegates delved into three pivotal themes - each offering a roadmap for cooperation and mutual growth.

Sichuan's ancient heritage - encompassing its 2,000-year-old tea cultivation practices and the vibrant folklore associated with Sichuan Opera. More

significantly, it acted as a venue to explore how these cultural heritages can promote greater comprehension between nations.

A Chinese delegate expressed beautifully, "In our present world, where misunderstandings frequently lead to tensions, these interactions enable us to overcome cultural barriers and gain insights from each other's pasts."

Economic cooperation took center stage during sessions, with leaders engaging in frank discussions about shared development opportunities. The importance of creating sustainable, inclusive economies was emphasized, with leaders from the European Council on Foreign Relations and the Pakistan-China Friendship Association echoing similar sentiments: "The future is not one where nations compete for scarce resources; it is a future where we share

opportunities, collaborate, and create mutual prosperity."

Participants explored ways to build stronger economic ties, not only between Sichuan and the world, but among all nations represented at the event. Whether discussing trade, innovation, or infrastructure, it became clear that the road to a better future requires both collective action and commitment.

Perhaps the most poignant theme was the call for fostering greater youth exchanges - a recognition of the critical role young people plays in shaping the future of global relations.

"The youth of today will be the leaders of tomorrow," one foreign delegate remarked, urging nations to invest in cross-cultural programs that would help future generations build bridges, not walls. This

idea of a united world - a "wonderful world" - struck a chord with everyone there, highlighting the importance of education and cultural awareness as the basis for worldwide harmony.

When the event came to an end, the feeling of optimism was unmistakable. Leaders praised the meeting as an important advancement in fostering more robust international alliances, honoring both cultural diversity and economic interconnectedness. "These conversations are more than a mere symbolic act; they serve as a practical guide for addressing the issues we encounter in a connected global community," remarked a participant.

In Sichuan's discussion symbolized China's overarching aim to promote cooperation across cultural, political, and economic boundaries. The province,

combining tradition and modernity, acted as an ideal setting for this international exchange - highlighting both its vibrant history and its promising future. "This occasion served as a reminder that although we may have numerous differences, our common objectives - peace, prosperity, and progress - unite us," wrapped up one of the event coordinators.

As the global community grapples with worldwide issues, it becomes evident that gatherings like this go beyond mere diplomatic formalities; they serve as the foundation for future collaboration, where understanding, respect, and teamwork transform from high-minded concepts into practical, achievable routes toward a better world.

(The writer is Secretary General of PCFA, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chapter) syeed.gilani@gmail.com



In brief

Nooh Butt wins gold medal

K A R A C H I (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan's Nooh Dastgir Butt has made history by setting a new record in the Asian Powerlifting Championship held in Tashkent. Competing in the 120+ kg category, Nooh lifted an impressive 400 kilograms in the squat event, establishing a new Asian record. His remarkable performance secured him his first gold medal in the championship. The remaining medals in the bench press, deadlift, and overall competitions are yet to be decided, with Nooh in contention for further accolades.

Sabalenka voted WTA Player of the Year

LONDON (Agencies): World number one Aryna Sabalenka has been voted the WTA Player of the Year after securing four titles in 2024. The Belarusian retained the Australian Open in January before winning the US Open in September - her third Grand Slam singles triumph. The 26-year-old also secured victories at the Cincinnati Open in August and the Wuhan Open in October, becoming the first woman to win the event three times. In October she became world number one, ending Iga Swiatek's 11-month stay at the summit. That was despite missing Wimbledon with injury, while Sabalenka also opted out of the Olympics in August to prioritise her health. She finished the season with a 56-14 win-loss record. It is the first time Sabalenka has been named Player of the Year, with Swiatek triumphing in 2022 and 2023. The winners are voted for by international tennis media.

Romero points finger at Spurs chiefs

LONDON (AFP): Tottenham defender Cristian Romero has said the club's board are the "true responsible ones" for a lack of progress after a run of one win in seven games. Romero was speaking to Spanish broadcaster Telemundo after Sunday's 4-3 defeat to Chelsea left Spurs 11th in the Premier League. "Manchester City competes every year, you see how Liverpool strengthens its squad, Chelsea strengthens their squad, doesn't do well, strengthens again, and now they're seeing results. Those are the things to imitate," said the Argentine international in quotes widely circulated in British media. "You have to realise that something is going wrong, hopefully, they (the board) realise it." Tottenham broke their transfer record to sign Dominic Solanke in a deal worth up to £65 million (\$83 million) in August, but most of the club's estimated £125 million spend in the summer transfer market was on teenage talents Archie Gray, Wilson Odobert and Lucas Bergvall, who have had a limited first team impact. Spurs boss Ange Postecoglou faces a potentially decisive week of his reign with a trip to Rangers in the Europa League on Thursday followed by a visit to bottom-of-the-table Southampton and a League Cup quarter-final against Manchester United. The Australian is the fifth manager, including caretakers, that Romero has played under since joining Tottenham in 2021. Spurs have not won a trophy since 2008 despite boasting one of the world's best stadiums and a state-of-the-art training ground.

WSF World Team Squash C'ship Unbeaten Pakistan qualify for playoffs

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's squash team continued stellar performance at the WSF World Team Squash Championship, defeating Italy 3-0 in their final pool match to finish unbeaten in Pool H in Hong Kong, China on Tuesday.

The comprehensive win saw Pakistan securing the top spot in their group with 6 points, earning a well-deserved place in the playoffs, according to information made available here by Pakistan Squash Federation.

In the match against Italy, Pakistan players showcased their complete dominance.

Muhammad Asim Khan delivered a confident start, defeating Omar Zaki Masoud in straight sets 11-8, 11-4, 11-7 in just 33 minutes.



Nasir Iqbal followed with a crushing victory over Daniele De Bartolomeo, conceding only four points across three sets 11-2, 11-1, 11-1, wrapping up his match in a mere 19 minutes.

Noor Zaman sealed the clean sweep with another straight-set win against Lorenzo Staurengo, taking

24 minutes to finish the match at 11-4, 11-7, 11-5. Earlier, on Monday Pakistan secured back-to-back wins against Peru and Hong Kong, China.

In the match against Peru Pakistan earned a 2-1 victory.

Asim Khan lost to world-class player Diego Elias in straight sets 4-11,

2-11, 3-11 (21m).

Noor Zaman battled hard to defeat Rafael Galvez in a five-game thriller 11-1, 11-4, 13-15, 11-13, 13-11 (58m).

Nasir Iqbal showcased his experience with a clinical win over Alonso Escudero, 11-3, 11-4, 11-2 (23m).

In the match against Hong Kong, China the team also registered a 2-1 win.

Asim Khan fell to Alex Lau in an intense five-setter 5-11, 11-7, 9-11, 13-11, 4-11 (64m).

Noor Zaman rallied to defeat Henry Leung in another five-game battle 7-11, 11-8, 5-11, 11-4, 11-6 (44m).

Nasir Iqbal secured victory with a commanding performance, beating Chi Him Wong 11-5, 11-5, 11-5 (31m).



DURBAN: A big chunk of David Miller's runs came in sixes, South Africa vs Pakistan, 1st T20I

Nafay guides UMT Markhors win against Engro Dolphins

RAWALPINDI (APP): Opening batter Khawaja Mohammad Nafay

smashed a fiery half century to anchor UMT Markhors' two-wicket win over a fighting Engro Dolphins on the fourth day of the Bahria Town Champions T20 Cup in Rawalpindi on Tuesday.

Nafay's 41-ball 68 spiced with four sixes and as many fours guided UMT Markhors to overhaul the modest 129-run target in 18.5 overs to give Markhors their second win in as many games.

The Misbah-ul-Haq mentored team is now second with four points while ABL Stallions are top of the table, also with four points from two matches but have a superior net run-rate.

The 22-year-old Nafay from Karachi lifted his team from the early loss of Fakhar Zaman (nought), Muhammad Shahzad (11, 9b, 2x4s) and Abdul Samad (1, 3b), adding 29 for the fourth

wicket with skipper Iftikhar Ahmed who made five.

Spinner Qasim Akram dismissed Nafay leg-before and then two more wickets fell as Dolphins fought back but Mohammad Nawaz made sure the chase was completed with a cautious 19-ball 18 not out including two fours while Akif Javed hit the winning boundary.

Dolphins, who have now lost both their matches, were given an ideal start by fast bowler Sameen Gul who took three early wickets but other than him no bowler could detrack the rampaging Markhors.

Earlier, sent into bat, Engro Dolphins lost Sahibzada Farhan in the first over, without scoring. Muhammad Akhlaq hit a 33-ball 40 studded with two sixes and three boundaries while Mirza Tahir Baig

knocked 28-ball 29 with two sixes and a boundary. Dolphins were relying on vice-captain Qasim Akram

who scored 14 and experienced batter Umar Amin who managed just 11 as they slumped from 81-2 to 128-9. Nawaz grabbed 3-28 while fast-rising pacer Akif Javed finished with 2-33.

Scores in brief:

Match 5 - UMT Markhors beat Engro Dolphins by two wickets, Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium

Engro Dolphins 128-9 in 20 overs (Muhammad Akhlaq 40, Mirza Tahir Baig 29; Mohammad Nawaz 3-28, Akif Javed 2-33)

UMT Markhors 132-8 in 18.5 overs (Khawaja Mohammad Nafay 68, Mohammad Nawaz 18 not out; Sameen Gul 3-23, Qasim Akram 2-11)

Player of the match - Khawaja Mohammad Nafay (UMT Markhors)

Tomorrow's fixture: Nurpur Lions vs Lake City Panthers, 12pm at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium.

Argentine court drops rape case against French rugby players

Mendoza (AFP): An Argentine court on Tuesday dismissed rape charges against two French international rugby players accused of assaulting a woman after playing a match in the country in July.

Hugo Auradou and Oscar Jegou, both 21, were arrested two days after winning their first international caps for France against Argentina in the western city of Mendoza. A 39-year-old woman, whom they met in a nightclub accused them of a vicious assault in a hotel room.

Auradou, a lock with French club Pau, and Jegou, a flanker with the club La Rochelle, insisted they had consensual sex with the woman after a night of drinking following their July 6 match.

A judge in Mendoza dismissed the case on the advice of the prosecution, which called for the charges to be dropped over inconsistencies in the woman's version of events.

"As we expected, the French players have been



acquitted because the (sexual) act was consensual, meaning there was no crime and no doubt that they are innocent," defense attorney German Hnatow announced.

The French rugby federation expressed "relief and satisfaction" at the outcome of the case and said that it paved the way for Auradou and Jegou to be selected again for the national team "if their sporting performances allow for it."

The players were kept in preventive custody for a little over a week in Mendoza and then under house arrest for nearly a month before being

allowed to return to France in September after prosecutors said the case against them appeared flimsy.

Auradou, a lock with Pau, and Jegou, a flanker with La Rochelle, were not present in Argentina for Tuesday's ruling. Their Parisian lawyer, Antoine Vey, on Tuesday hailed their "judicial rehabilitation."

He added that for the players' "clubs, families and the (French rugby) federation, it was a day they have been waiting for and, which, I hope, will close the difficult chapter that they experienced."

The complainant has not

yet announced whether she plans to appeal the decision. The accusations against Auradou and Jegou, coupled with racist remarks by full-back Melvyn Jaminet, for which he was sent home and given a 34-week suspension, overshadowed the French team's summer tour of Argentina.

French rugby federation president Florian Grill last month announced an overhaul of disciplinary measures in the wake of the scandals. He also vowed to put an end to the kind of "fourth and fifth half" post-match celebrations that took place in Mendoza.

"There will be financial or sporting sanctions" in the future, he continued regretting in previous years "a form of acceptance of these excesses which could sometimes even be organised." "We cannot take all the positives from rugby, ask brands and partners to associate their image with our presupposed values and not respect them," he added.

PCB-HEC Intervarsity cricket c'ship commences

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Higher Education Commission (HEC), and Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) have joined hands to identify and develop cricketing talent at the grassroots level, ultimately strengthening Pakistan's cricket ecosystem.

According to the HEC, following the successful completion of 14 zonal competitions across Pakistan's universities, the stage is set for the Intervarsity Championship for Men to be held from December 10, 2024 at Peshawar, hosted by University of Peshawar in which 18 teams from different universities are participating.

This initiative aims to bridge the gap between educational institutions and professional cricket, promoting sports development and empowering youth. The championship will feature top university teams, with expert coaches and selectors identifying promising players for future development.

It has been agreed in MoU between HEC and PCB that equal emphasis will be given on developing cricket talent among both men and women. Building on the success of the recently concluded Intervarsity Cricket Championship for Women, HEC and PCB reaffirm their

commitment to promoting cricket talent among both men and women.

The Cricket Intervarsity Championship for Men is a testament to a strategic partnership between HEC and PCB, dedicated to promoting cricket development in Pakistan at grassroots level. HEC is proud to partner with PCB in fostering university cricket talent, contributing to the overall development of our youth. Further, it is worth noting that HEC is committed to participating in President's Trophy Grade-I (First Class) which is the highest-level domestic tournament under PCB.

FIFA to confirm 2030 WC hosts and hand Saudi 2034 tournament



LAUSANNE (AFP): FIFA will confirm the hosts of the 2030 and 2034 World Cups on Wednesday, with a joint bid led by Morocco, Spain and Portugal set to be awarded the former, and the latter being handed to Saudi Arabia.

The awarding of hosting rights for both tournaments will go to a vote during a FIFA Congress to be held virtually, but there is no doubt about the outcomes with neither bid having a

rival. The 2030 tournament will mark a century since the first World Cup was held in Uruguay, and as a result the bid will also see the South American nation handed a game along with Argentina and Paraguay.

That makes it a remarkable and completely unprecedented bid, involving three different continental confederations. FIFA already confirmed over a year ago that the joint proposal led by

Morocco, Spain and Portugal was the sole contender for 2030, with all other potential candidacies having fallen by the wayside.

A joint British and Irish bid was abandoned when they decided to focus on hosting Euro 2028, while there were suggestions of a bid from South Korea, China, Japan and North Korea. Four South American countries launched a joint bid in 2019, convinced that the centenary World Cup should entirely take place on the same continent where it all began.

In late 2022, UEFA promoted a bid uniting Spain and Portugal with war-torn Ukraine in a show of "solidarity" following the Russian invasion. However, Ukraine was quietly dropped from that candidacy last year as Morocco joined forces with the Iberian neighbours,

while South America agreed to step aside in exchange for being awarded the hosting of three games, one each for Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentina.

Morocco plans mega stadium

Following these "centenary celebrations" in the comparative chill of the southern hemisphere winter, the six teams involved -- along with their fans -- will have to cross the Atlantic Ocean to play a part in the remaining 101 matches.

This tentacular tournament will conclude with the final on July 21, and it remains to be seen where that game will be staged.

Spain, which hosted the 1982 World Cup, is set to be the centrepiece as it boasts 11 of the 20 proposed stadiums. Morocco -- which has tried and failed on five previous occasions to be award-

ed the staging of the tournament -- will become the second African nation to host the competition after South Africa in 2010.

Potential venues for the final include the Santiago Bernabeu in Madrid and Barcelona's renovated Camp Nou, as well as the planned Hassan II stadium between Casablanca and Rabat, which is set to become "the biggest stadium in the world" with a capacity of 115,000. Portugal, which hosted Euro 2004, will offer two stadiums in Lisbon and one in Porto, and hopes to stage a semi-final.

Human rights concerns As for 2034, FIFA invoked its principle of continental rotation, therefore only welcoming bids from Asia or Oceania -- the 2026 World Cup, the first involving 48 teams, will take place across North America.

Controversially, the body gave potential bidders barely a month late last year to submit candidacies, and Australia and Indonesia quickly abandoned their interest. That left Saudi Arabia as the sole candidate, clearing the way for the World Cup to return to the Gulf region following Qatar's hosting in 2022.

The kingdom's de facto ruler, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, has been using sport for some time now to amass influence and improve its global image.

Being handed the 2034 World Cup will be a crowning moment, and Saudi will win despite currently only boasting two stadiums with a capacity of 40,000, when 14 are required.

Beyond that logistical challenge, the baking temperatures in the northern

hemisphere summer could mean pushing the tournament back to later in the year, as happened in 2022.

However, the fact that Ramadan will take place in December that year is an added complication.

Moreover, the awarding of the World Cup to Saudi will make the issue of human rights a major talking point again, just as in 2022.

Rights groups highlight mass executions in Saudi Arabia and allegations of torture, as well as restrictions on women under the conservative country's male guardianship system. Free expression is severely restricted too. Saudi Arabia, which is hosting several high-profile events including Formula One and the WTA Finals tennis, is often accused of "sportswashing" -- using sport to divert attention from its rights record.



In brief

AIOU offers failed students for re-exam

ISLAMABAD (APP): The results for Spring Semester 2024 of Matric and FA programs at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) have been announced. According to the AIOU, the students whose results show "FER" are eligible to register for their failed subjects and avail a re-examination opportunity by December 15. It is worth mentioning that the current Vice Chancellor, Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood, introduced a new system for registering failed subjects, which has been met with appreciation by the students. Under this new system, Matric and FA students with "FER" in their results can benefit from this opportunity by registering themselves by the December 15 deadline, ensuring their chance to sit for the exam. Students can obtain further information from the main campus in Islamabad or any of the regional offices of the university located across the country.

215 Police personnel promoted

RAWALPINDI (APP): Regional Police Officer (RPO) Rawalpindi Babar Sarfaraz Alpa on Tuesday promoted some 215 personnel, including 122 assistant sub-inspectors (ASIs) and 93 head constables to the next grades. A special departmental board headed by the RPO and comprising City Police Officer Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Mahmood Hamdani, District Police Officer (DPO) Attock Dr Sardar Ghiyas Gul Khan, DPO Chakwal Lt. (ret'd) Ahmed Mohiuddin, DPO Jhelum Nasir Mahmood Bajwa and DPO Murree Asif Amin Awan formulated its recommendations after checking the service records and data of all the personnel. Based on the board's recommendations, 122 ASIs were promoted as sub-inspectors (SIs) and 93 head constables as ASIs, a Rawalpindi Police spokesman said. RPO Babar Sarfaraz Alpa, while congratulating the promoted personnel said that as per the orders of Inspector General of Police Punjab Dr Usman Anwar, the process of timely promotion of the force would continue. He exhorted them to perform their duties with more dedication as they had been promoted because of their excellent service record and performance, and ensure the provision of justice to the citizens.

13 professional beggars held

ISLAMABAD (APP): The district administration has intensified its efforts to curb the menace of professional begging in the federal capital, with 13 individuals arrested in recent operations. According to the spokesman of the administration, in a recent move, the district administration, under the supervision of Assistant Commissioner (Rural), arrested 13 professional beggars. The arrests were carried out in the jurisdictions of Lohi Bher and Humak police stations. Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon, has urged residents to actively support the ongoing drive against professional begging. He stressed the importance of collective action to tackle this issue and appealed the residents to cooperate with authorities and report incidents of organized begging. Memon called upon the public to avoid giving money to individuals begging at public places, as it could inadvertently support these networks. Instead, he encouraged people to support recognised charitable organisations that work to address poverty and provide assistance to those in need.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for interior Mohsin Naqvi in a meeting with Acting US ambassador Natalie Baker. —INP Photo

Muqam calls on global community to address HR violations in IIOJK

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan and SAFRON Engineer Amir Muqam urged on the international community to take action against India about the human rights violations in IIOJK. The minister said in his message on the eve of International Human Rights Day, he said that Today, the whole world is celebrating International Human Rights Day and

this day reminded the world to uphold the protection of human rights. On International Human Rights Day, we should not forget our brothers and sisters in the illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). The serious human rights violations in the illegal Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir also require urgent attention from the international community, including the United Nations.

The desecration of women in occupied Kashmir is a daily practice for the Indian army and humanity has been humiliated in the occupied valley for the past several years. India continuously committing atrocities in occupied Kashmir and the Indian army has so far martyred millions of Kashmiris. Thousands of women have become widows, thousands of Kashmiri children have become orphans.

The world must understand that there is no peace in the world without a solution to the Kashmir issue, India is changing the population ratio in occupied Kashmir-Pakistan also pledges to continue its moral, political and diplomatic support for the Kashmiris to achieve their legitimate right to self-determination. The Government of Pakistan will continue to work for justice, equality, dignity and human rights for all.

Senator Rubina pays tribute to BB's vision of women empowerment

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Senator Rubina Khalid, paid tribute to Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto's unparalleled struggle for women's economic independence. She announced a series of events at BISP's central and regional offices to honour Bibi Shaheed on her 17th death anniversary, including Quran recitation, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's birthday celebrations, and Christmas festivities. Speaking at BISP Headquarters, Senator Rubina Khalid recalled Bibi Shaheed's famous words: "Skill is your capital that no one can take away from you." She emphasized the transformative potential of skills in reducing unemployment across Pakistan. Under the Benazir Hunarmand Program, inspired by Bibi Shaheed's vision, 40 semi-skilled individuals from deserving backgrounds will receive international-standard skill training in the program's pilot phase, with arrangements being made to facilitate their

employment abroad. In her opening remarks, Rubina Khalid reflected on the significance of December as a month of both joy and sorrow. She highlighted the birth anniversary of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the Christmas festivities shared with the Christian community as moments of happiness. At the same time, she acknowledged the grief of Bibi Shaheed's martyrdom, which continues to resonate deeply. "This December 27 marks 17 years since Bibi Shaheed left us, but her loss remains fresh in our hearts," she said. She continued, "To honour her legacy, we are launching a series of commemorative events under the BISP platform". Senator Rubina Khalid praised Bibi Shaheed's dedication to empower women economically, describing her efforts as unparalleled. She also credited the former President of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari, for declaring women households eligible for financial assistance under BISP. She highlighted that 9.6 million families are currently benefiting

from the program, with the number expected to reach 10 million soon. The senator underscored the growing international recognition of BISP's social protection programs. She recalled how, in its early years, BISP teams traveled to countries like Mexico to learn from their social protection initiatives. Today, countries such as Uganda and others from West Africa visit BISP to study its successes and consider implementing similar programs in their own nations. Rubina Khalid announced that BISP is actively engaging with international organizations, including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Lives & Livelihood Fund, Islamic Development Bank, and other skill training institutions, to introduce high-quality skill training programs for its beneficiaries. "This movement requires collective effort," Senator Rubina Khalid concluded. "May Allah Almighty grant us the strength to utilize our resources effectively and contribute to Pakistan's development", she prayed.

UN Women's Rolling Resistance concludes with a call to end Gender-Based violence

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Rolling Resistance: Theatre on Wheels campaign, a cornerstone of UN Women Pakistan's 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, reached its powerful conclusion at the Pak-China Friendship Center in Islamabad. This groundbreaking initiative, which has travelled across Pakistan, delivered its poignant message of #KoJawaazNahi (#NoExcuse) to a national audience, sparking dialogue and inspiring collective action against gender-based violence (GBV). Mohamed Yahya, UN Resident Coordinator in Pakistan, highlighted the United Nations' commitment to supporting gender equality "As we conclude this year's 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, I want to honor the resilience of survivors of domestic violence. These women and girls have faced unimaginable pain, yet their courage to rebuild their lives inspires us all." He further added, "Our mission is unwavering: to create a world where survivors are not only heard but also empowered. This requires ensuring access to justice, fostering financial independence, and building support systems that enable women to reclaim their lives and thrive." The event featured a final performance on the iconic Rolling Resistance mobile theatre truck, delivering a compelling narrative on the importance of justice for survivors and accountability for perpetrators. Students, activists, and policymakers engaged in post-performance discussions, sharing insights and strategies for fostering safer communities. Jamshed Kazi, Country Representative Designate UN Women Pakistan, opened the event,



emphasizing the campaign's transformative journey: "Gender-based violence is not merely a women's issue; it is a profound human rights crisis that impacts every aspect of society. Achieving gender equality and eradicating gender-based violence requires the unwavering dedication of individuals, organizations, and institutions. Campaigns like Rolling Resistance and The Invisible exemplify the power of collaboration and the transformative potential of united efforts." In parallel with Rolling Resistance, UN Women launched Invisible campaign. This powerful initiative reinterprets traditional bridal henna designs, using them to trace bruises and injuries that reveal hidden stories of abuse. The campaign's evocative imagery—a black eye, marks of strangulation, and other signs of violence—brings the invisible scars of domestic violence into stark focus, amplifying the voices of survivors and making their silent suffering visible to all. Through initiatives like Rolling Resistance and The Invisible, UN Women Pakistan continues to ampli-

fy advocacy against GBV, fostering awareness, dialogue, and action for a safer, more equitable future. Romina Khurshid Alam, Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to gender equality. She said, "The government of Pakistan is committed to ensuring that Pakistan becomes a country where women and girls can thrive without the shadow of violence. Rolling Resistance is a testament to the power of grassroots advocacy, and we are proud to support this impactful initiative." The concluding candle lighting ceremony brought together attendees in a solemn moment of reflection and unity, symbolizing the shared resolve to illuminate the path toward a violence-free society. The Rolling Resistance: Theatre on Wheels campaign has traveled from Karachi to Lahore, Peshawar, Kohat, and Mardan, engaging diverse audiences and amplifying its call to action. Aligned with Beijing+30 advocacy priorities, the campaign focuses on strengthening accountability by delivering justice to survivors and holding perpetrators responsible, securing sustainable funding for women's rights organizations and advancing national strategies and action plans to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls. Observed annually from November 25 (International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women) to December 10 (Human Rights Day), the 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence is a global movement demanding urgent action to eradicate GBV. Through the #KoJawaazNahi campaign, UN Women Pakistan seeks to inspire a society built on dignity, equality, and safety for all.

Naqvi, US envoy discuss strengthening ties, modernizing law enforcement

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal minister for interior Mohsin Naqvi on Tuesday met here with acting US ambassador Natalie Baker along with INL country director Line Nelson to discuss bilateral relations and enhanced cooperation between Pakistan and the United States. During the discussion, Ambassador Baker expressed condolences for the recent martyrdom of police and Rangers personnel in Islamabad. The meeting covered a range of topics, including strengthening Pakistan-U.S. relations, advancing law enforcement collaboration, and preparations for hosting the ICC

Champions Trophy in Pakistan. Minister Naqvi highlighted Pakistan's vision to modernize the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) along the lines of the FBI, with the U.S. agreeing to provide support for this transformation. It was also agreed that the US would assist in modernizing Pakistan's National Forensic Agency to meet contemporary challenges. "Enhancing the capacity of law enforcement agencies and equipping civil armed forces with modern tools are top priorities to counter terrorism and manage emergencies," Naqvi stated.

Ambassador Baker reaffirmed U.S. support in these efforts and commended Pakistan's commitment to improving law enforcement. She also praised the successful organization of a police officers' passing-out parade, congratulating Minister Naqvi on the achievement. The meeting underscored the strong and long-standing relations between Pakistan and the U.S., emphasizing mutual goals for security and cooperation. Federal Interior Secretary Khurram Ali Agha and Additional Interior Secretary Riffat Mukhtar Raja were also present at the occasion.

Danyal Chaudhry reviews Punjab's Free Medicine Project

RAWALPINDI (APP): Barrister Danyal Chaudhry, Parliamentary Secretary for Information and Broadcasting visited the Rawalpindi Institute of Cardiology on Tuesday to review the progress of Punjab's "Free Medicine Project," a flagship initiative under the government's health reforms. Highlighting the significance of the initiative on Human Rights Day, he reiterated that access to complete treatment, including medicines, is a fundamen-

tal right of every patient. His visit underscored the government's dedication to safeguarding these rights through concrete steps. Barrister Danyal inspected wards, received briefings from hospital management, and addressed patients' concerns about the reported medicine shortage during his visit to Rawalpindi Institute of Cardiology (RIC). The parliamentary secretary pledged to resolve challenges faced by heart patients and ensure that the

Free Medicine Project benefits those in need as intended. The Rawalpindi Institute of Cardiology (RIC) is a vital healthcare center, offering treatment to patients from Rawalpindi and across Pakistan, including areas from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to Potohar. He emphasized the government's commitment to ensuring that all resources allocated for public welfare are utilized efficiently and transparently.

RDA removes encroachments on High Court Road

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) on Thursday carried out an operation to remove encroachments on the High Court Road. The action, taken on the directions of RDA Director General Kinza Murtaza, was aimed at improving road accessibility and ensuring a safer environment for commuters and pedestrians, an RDA spokesman said. The RDA's Enforcement Squad undertook a comprehensive operation to clear illegal structures, shops, vendors and unauthorized street installations obstructing traffic and posing a risk to public safety.

The spokesman said the operation, which was carried out in collaboration with local law enforcement, received widespread support from the general public who had long expressed concern over the increasing encroachments in the area. RDA DG Kinza Murtaza said, "This operation is part of our broader efforts to restore the city's infrastructure, and to make sure that all roads remain accessible and safe for the public." "Encroachments not only create traffic congestion but also present significant hazards. The RDA is committed to maintaining the integrity of Rawalpindi's urban

spaces," she added. Kinza Murtaza said the removal of the encroachments along the High Court Road would significantly improve the overall traffic management system and enhance the aesthetic value of the locality. She said the RDA, as part of its larger urban planning strategy aimed at optimizing the city's infrastructure, was planning a series of future operations to eliminate encroachments on other major roads. The RDA DG urged the public to cooperate with the authorities for maintaining encroachment-free zones, and ensuring safe and accessible the city's streets for all.

Sohail Nasir urges nationwide effort to end corruption

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Deputy Chairman of NAB, Sohail Nasir, on Tuesday urged everyone, especially the youth, to play a role in eliminating corruption and pledged to continue the fight until corruption is completely eradicated from the country. Speaking at a seminar on "Building a Bright Future with Youth Against Corruption," Deputy Chairman of NAB highlighted that corruption has manifested in various forms throughout history. He emphasized that International Anti-Corruption Day, observed globally on December 9, including in Pakistan, is a reminder to renew the commitment to eradicate this issue and to raise public awareness. He emphasized that corruption is not confined to a single country, and global efforts, including in Pakistan, are underway to address it. The Deputy Chairman of NAB referred to this as a struggle between good and evil. He quoted the Holy Quran, saying, "Hand over the trust of the people to them," and highlighted that Hazrat Muhammad was known by the titles "Sadiq" and "Amin," with even polytheists and non-believers acknowledging his honesty. Sohail Nasir stated that the rights of others should be respected and encouraged the youth not to lose hope. He emphasized the importance of collective efforts to eradicate corruption and pledged to fight until the end to eliminate corruption from the country. Speaking at the ceremony, Director General of

NAB Rawalpindi, Mirza Muhammad Irfan Baig, stated that corruption erodes trust, impedes development, and fosters inequality. In this context, the theme set by the United Nations this year is "Unifying Youth against Corruption: Guaranteeing Tomorrow's Development." It highlights the crucial role of youth in shaping the future, which is closely tied to transparency and accountability. He mentioned that in the year 2023-24, NAB Rawalpindi/Islamabad received 55,512 complaints, of which 55,488 have been resolved. A recovery of Rs. 19.26 billion is currently in progress. Furthermore, the value of properties seized in various cases amounts to Rs. 991.8 million. Thanks to the tireless efforts of the NAB Rawalpindi/Islamabad team, the looted money has been returned to 6,923 victims in different Ponzi schemes and cases. He stated that the youth are a beacon of hope in the fight against corruption and that their patriotic spirit can be harnessed for positive change. NAB is dedicated to fostering equality across all segments of society. He stated that, as part of a new strategy, young leaders have been engaged to promote ethical education and provide a platform for dialogue and action. A prime example of this is the establishment of character-building committees in educational institutions. Baig stated that through these efforts, the goal is to ensure that whenever youth encounter corruption, they

not only recognize it but also promptly report it to law enforcement agencies, including NAB. He emphasized that educational institutions and students should reject corruption, advocate for transparency, and contribute to the overall development of society. Governments, educational institutions, civil society organizations, and the private sector must come together to create opportunities for youth involvement. Education plays a vital role in this effort. By integrating anti-corruption principles into both curricular and extracurricular activities, we can foster healthy competition and instill values of responsibility among the public. He stated that digitalization of the economy is crucial for reducing corruption. He urged all institutions to focus on self-accountability during the digitalization process and called on them to reaffirm their commitment to the shared mission of development and prosperity. In his address, Chairman of Pakistan Sweet Home, Zamrud Khan, expressed his full support for the eradication of corruption in the country. He emphasized the importance of education and training in schools, colleges, and universities to combat corruption. He urged the youth to stay away from all forms of corruption and adopt a positive mindset. Additionally, he encouraged them to reject any anti-Pakistan propaganda on social media.

Over 229m afn collected

KUNDUZ (BNA): Kunduz Breshna Sherkat (Electricity Directorate) have reported that the directorate collected more than 229 million Afghanis in revenue during the month of Aqrab, 1403. According to the director of public relations for the Kunduz Breshna Sherkat, Omar Kandzi, the directorate earned a total of 229,509,310 Afghanis from the sale of various electricity services during the month of Aqrab. This amount has been deposited into the state treasury.

Ambassador hold meeting

KABUL (BNA): The Acting Ambassador of Afghanistan in Tehran held a meeting with the Director General for South Asia at Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to discuss matters related to Afghan refugees, traders, and investors residing in Iran. Mawlawi Fazl Mohammad Haqqani, the Acting Ambassador of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in Tehran, met with Hashem Ashja Zadeh, the Director General for South Asia at Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Officials announce ongoing extraction at 11 Uruzgan mines

URUZGAN (TOLONews): Local authorities in Uruzgan report that mining operations are ongoing in 11 out of the 35 identified mines in the province.

According to the authorities, contracts for the extraction of these mines have been signed with domestic companies, creating job opportunities for residents.

Uruzgan is a province rich in stone and mineral resources.

"So far, 35 mines have been identified in Uruzgan province, including chromite and marble mines,

out of which 11 mines have been handed over to domestic companies," said Agha Wali Qureshi, head of the Information and Culture of Uruzgan.

Meanwhile, some residents of Uruzgan have urged the caretaker government to use the revenue from these mines in development projects for the province.

"The income from mining should be used for urban development, the construction of recreational parks, and the improvement of agriculture. This province needs road recon-

struction and repairs to damaged areas," said Abdul Bari, a resident of Uruzgan.

"Job opportunities must be provided to the people of Afghanistan on a large scale. It is now time to use the country's mines for reconstruction," said Sayed Wali Sediqi, a university professor.

Additionally, local officials in Uruzgan province stated that the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum will soon sign two contracts for the extraction of fluo-rite stone in the Gizab district with some domestic companies.

Women's rights in Afghanistan discussed

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Australian Embassy for Afghanistan reported a meeting between Stephanie Copus-Campbell, the country's Ambassador for Gender Equality, and a representative from the United Nations Women's Division.

The meeting focused on human rights issues and the challenges faced by women and children in Afghanistan.

In a social media post on Monday, December 9, the embassy stated that discussions centered around the "widespread human rights and humanitarian challenges faced by women and children in Afghanistan."

The meeting between the Australian Ambassador for Gender Equality and the United Nations Women representative comes at a time when women in Afghanistan are facing severe legal and social restrictions, with access to education, employment, and basic freedoms significantly limited.

Australia, alongside Germany, the Netherlands, and Canada, was among the first countries to announce plans to file a complaint against the Taliban at the International Court of Justice.

Recently, Penny Wong, Australia's Foreign Minister, reacted to the closure of medical institutions in Afghanistan, stating that the Taliban had destroyed one of the few remaining opportunities for women in the country.

As the situation for women in Afghanistan continues to deteriorate, international bodies and countries like Australia are increasing their efforts to address the ongoing human rights violations.

The actions of global leaders will play a crucial role in determining whether Afghanistan's women will regain access to basic freedoms and rights in the future.

The international community's pressure on the Taliban remains a key factor in shaping the country's future.

Panjshir hosts auction for emeralds

KABUL (BNA): The authorities in Panjshir province of Afghanistan have successfully auctioned over 3,000 carats of freshly mined emeralds, emphasizing the region's growing role in Afghanistan's gemstone industry.

According to Saifuddin Latif, the spokesman for Panjshir province, 3,292 carats of emeralds were sold for \$143,600 through a transparent bidding process.

The event was supervised by the Directorate of Mines Oversight Committee, local officials and traders, ensuring accountability and fair pricing.

The emeralds, extracted from mines in the Hesa Awal District, highlight the province's potential in mineral exports.

Officials noted that similar auctions have previously facilitated the sale of high-quality emeralds to Afghan traders, supporting local economic development.

UN aid reaches over 15 million in Afghanistan in 9 months

KABUL (Khaama Press): The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) for Afghanistan has reported that it has provided aid to 15.3 million people in Afghanistan over the past nine months.

On Tuesday, December 10, OCHA published a message on its X page, stating that 23.7 million people in Afghanistan still require humanitarian assistance.

The report indicates that over 17 million of those in need have been reached by the organization's efforts.

According to OCHA, addressing the needs of the population in Afghanistan will require a budget of \$3.6 billion, with \$958 million already received.

As the winter season begins in Afghanistan, international aid organizations have warned of an increase in demand for assistance due to the harsh conditions.

Previously, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) had also warned that 14.8 million people in Afghanistan will require immediate aid during the upcoming winter season.

With the mounting challenges posed by the winter season, it is critical for international bodies to continue providing the necessary aid and resources to the people of Afghanistan. As the humanitarian crisis deepens, the global community's response will play a crucial role in alleviating the suffering of millions.

Turkish charity officials explore investment prospects in Afghanistan

KABUL (BNA): The Acting Minister of Energy and Water, Mullah Abdul Latif Mansoor, met with a delegation of Turkish scholars and officials from the Adif Charity Foundation to discuss various political, religious, and social issues.

According to the Ministry of Energy and Water, Mullah Mansoor praised Adif's humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan and highlighted the country's ample resources for energy production.

He emphasized that Afghanistan currently offers a favorable environment for investment in all sectors, assuring the Turkish delegation of the Islamic Emirate's commitment to ensuring the safety



and security of investors and their assets.

In response, Adif officials pledged to encourage

Turkish investors to explore and capitalize on investment opportunities in Afghanistan, signaling a potential boost in economic and developmental cooperation between the two nations.

Rise in dollar value in Afghanistan impacting food prices

KABUL (TOLONews): In the past two weeks, the value of one US dollar has increased by four afghani in Afghanistan.

According to data from Sarai Shahzada money exchangers, one dollar is currently exchanged for 70.40 afghanis.

Alongside the rise in the dollar's value, some residents of the capital have complained about the increasing prices of food items in the markets.

Afghanistan remains dependent on importing most of its essential goods from foreign countries, as it has not yet achieved self-sufficiency in food production.

Mohammad Akbar, a

Kabul resident, said: "The price of food items has reached about 1,700 to 1,800 afghani. How can someone earning 200 afghani a day afford rent, food, and utility bills?"

Shir Mohammad, another Kabul resident, urged the government to take action to reduce prices: "We ask the Islamic Emirate to work on lowering the prices of flour and cooking oil so that shopkeepers don't overcharge."

Some shopkeepers attributed the rising food prices to the increase in the dollar's exchange rate against the afghani. They noted that currency fluctuations have negatively impacted their businesses

as well.

"The dollar becomes expensive, and we don't know why. We, as small shopkeepers, sell a can of oil with a profit of just 20 afghani, but when the dollar's value rises, we may incur losses of up to 100 Afghanis," said Gul Mohammad, a shopkeeper.

"Previously, the price of a can of oil was 1,350 afghani, but now it has risen to 1,850 afghani. If prices were lower, we'd sell more," said Abdul Wahid, another shopkeeper.

The Central Bank announced it would prevent severe fluctuations in the exchange rate of foreign currencies.

Haseebullah Noori, the

bank's spokesperson, told TOLONews: "The Central Bank of Afghanistan is working to manage the dollar's value effectively and ensure the afghani doesn't lose its worth," said Haseebullah Noori, the spokesperson of Da Afghanistan Bank.

The afghani is now among the stable currencies in the region. If market demand arises, the Central Bank has sufficient resources and will act with reasonable monetary policies to maintain the afghani's stability."

The Central Bank announced it had injected \$16 million into the market to control the exchange rate.

Embassy engages Iran on consular service improvements

KABUL (BNA): The Embassy of Afghanistan in Tehran has reported a meeting between its Acting Ambassador and the General Director for Consular Affairs at Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

According to a press release from the Afghanistan Embassy, Mawlawi Fazl Mohammad Haqqani, Afghanistan's Acting Ambassador in Tehran, met with Mojtaba Shasti, General Director for Consular Affairs at the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in his office.

During the meeting, both sides discussed improving consular services for Afghan migrants and travelers. Topics included enhancing coordination, facilitating consular processes, and addressing issues related to the issuance of inter-



national passports and identity verification.

It is worth noting that the Acting Ambassador had

previously met with the General Director for South Asia at Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to discuss

matters concerning Afghan migrants, traders, and investors residing in the country.

UNAMA urges Taliban to adhere to global HRs obligations

KABUL (Khaama Press): On the occasion of Human Rights Day, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) issued a statement addressing the officials of the Taliban administration. The mes-

sage emphasized that "power comes with responsibility."

In the statement released on Tuesday, December 10, UNAMA urged Taliban regime to uphold its global human rights commitments, calling them essential for the protection of future generations.

Roza Otunbayeva, the head of UNAMA, expressed concern over the leadership's record, particularly highlighting the "systematic discrimination" against women and girls in Afghanistan. She lamented the ongoing situation and its impact on Afghan society.

She stated that the erosion of human rights in Afghanistan is "continuing persistently and dangerously," with women and girls bearing the brunt of the consequences. December 10 marks the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is why the day is recognized as "Human Rights Day."

The United Nations has chosen the slogan "Our Rights, Our Future, Right Now" for the commemoration of Human Rights Day in 2024.

In a recent move, the Taliban has denied education to at least 35,000 female students due to the ban on women in medical institutions.

These students were enrolled in 10 government and over 150 private

institutes. According to sources from the Taliban's Ministry of Public Health, these women were studying nursing, midwifery, dentistry, and laboratory sciences.

The ban has forced many students to abandon their studies and dreams of pursuing medical careers.

Women who were once hopeful about their future in healthcare are now facing a setback with no clear path forward.

The decision has sparked widespread concern over the impact on healthcare in Afghanistan, where women play a vital role in medical fields. This move not only limits educational opportunities for women but also harms the country's medical workforce.

International organizations and human rights groups have condemned the ban, calling it a major setback for women's rights in Afghanistan.

As the international community marks Human Rights Day, there are growing calls for the protection of basic rights and freedoms, especially for those most vulnerable in conflict zones like Afghanistan. The situation remains dire, and the path forward requires a commitment to justice, equality, and the fundamental dignity of all individuals.

Ghor residents protest poor healthcare services

GHOR (TOLONews): Residents of several districts in Ghor province have complained about limited services at healthcare centers in these districts.

According to them, many residents of Ghor's districts are forced to transfer their patients to Ghor's provincial center or other provinces due to this challenge.

"When we bring our patients here, there are no facilities. My patient was giving birth. This center doesn't even have a room where visitors can light a fire to warm themselves in the cold season. Caretakers have to stay out in the open fields," said Ghulam Rasool, a resident of Shahrak district in Ghor.

"Our clinic lacks facilities. There is no ambulance or other equipment here. People, despite having poor financial conditions, are forced to transfer their patients to another location

at their own expense or by taking loans," said Abdul Zahir, another resident of Shahrak district.

The head of a health center in the Shahrak district also acknowledged the lack of medicine and other essential resources at this center, which receives up to 200 patients daily.

"We receive limited amounts of medicine, which isn't enough for the patients we see daily. When a pregnant woman is brought in for abnormal delivery, we don't have cesarean facilities. No surgical operations are available at our clinic," said Nawab Delawar, head of the Kamnaj clinic in Ghor province.

Doctors at several health centers in Ghor's districts also called the lack of medicine and healthcare facilities a major challenge in treating patients. They have urged for the provision of neces-

sary resources and medications at these centers.

"We don't have cesarean facilities or doctors to perform gynecological surgeries, nor do we have a blood bank to help patients. Due to the lack of facilities, patients are either transferred to Firozkoh city or Herat," said Gulsoom, one of the doctors.

"The clinic's services do not meet the people's demands, and we cannot fulfill their needs," said Abdul Khabir Hakimzi, another doctor.

Ghor is a mountainous province with difficult-to-pass roads. In winter, heavy snowfall and rainfall block access to the districts, Firozkoh city, and the main highways connecting Ghor to neighboring provinces. Residents of Ghor report that under such conditions, patients cannot reach healthcare centers, and some die on the way.

35,000 female students denied education

KABUL (Khaama Press): Sources in the Taliban's Ministry of Health told AFP that at least 35,000 female students have been deprived of their education due to the ban on women in medical institutions.

These students were enrolled in 10 government institutes and over 150 private ones, according to the sources. Some of the students affected by this decision have expressed fear and despair over the closure of these institutions.

Zahra, one of the students who had switched from university to a medical institute after schools were closed, said, "This was my last hope to do something, to become someone. But everything has been taken away from us simply because we are girls." The

Taliban leader recently instructed educational institutions to prevent women from being admitted. Zahra, who was in her first year at a private institution, added, "Everyone is confused, and no one really knows what's happening. We take two or three exams every day... even though we finished our exams months ago."

One administrator of a private institution in Kabul, which has 1,100 students, 700 of whom are women, said, "We have received many messages from students and teachers asking if there is any hope. No one is happy." According to sources from the Taliban's Ministry of Public Health, 35,000 women were studying fields like nursing, midwifery, dentistry, and laboratory sciences at these

institutions.

The UN has condemned this decision, describing it as systematic and unacceptable discrimination against women. Experts have called the decision "gendericide," warning that it could lead to "unnecessary suffering, disease, and possibly death for Afghan women and children."

The UN stated that this decision would have devastating consequences in a country that already has some of the highest maternal and neonatal mortality rates in the world. Since the Taliban regained power in 2021, the group has imposed widespread restrictions on women, making Afghanistan the only country where girls are banned from attending school beyond the 6th grade.



QUETTA: Illegal migrants going back to Afghanistan.

Focus on to promote girls education: KP CM

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A delegation of the Young Parliamentarians Forum (YPF), led by its President Syeda Nosheen Itikhar, comprising members from various political parties and provinces, called on the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur at the Chief Minister's Secretariat here on Tuesday. Country's political landscape and matters of national interest came under discussion during the meeting.

The Chief Minister emphasized the need for smaller provinces and administrative units to enhance governance and service delivery, and stated that large administrative setups hinder effective management, whereas smaller units would resolve up to 90% of administrative issues and address public grievances at grass root level. He also urged young parliamentarians to study international governance models and recommend the same to government to be adopted.

Touching upon his government's initiatives, Gandapur mentioned the establishment of regional secretariats using existing resources with the aim to improve governance and public service delivery at regional level. He stressed the importance of enhancing the country's international credibility,

which he believes has been hampered by unfulfilled commitments to global institutions. This, he noted, deters foreign investment. "We must work on improving our credibility to regain international trust," he asserted.

The Chief Minister also pointed out the mismanagement of developmental priorities, which often results in resource wastage. He advocated for focusing on projects that directly benefit larger populations and can be realistically completed within set timelines. "Our government prioritizes service delivery over constructing buildings, adding that instead of waiting for years to construct school buildings, we are opening schools in rented buildings to provide access to education immediately.

Gandapur further highlighted efforts to strengthen basic health facilities, introduce reforms in the health card system for cost efficiency, and promote girls' education, particularly in merged districts, where 100% scholarships are being provided.

On infrastructure development, he noted that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has vast potential in hydropower and shared that work is underway on 800 MW projects in the province, and added that provincial government is also establishing its own transmission lines to provide low-cost electricity to industries to create maximum employment opportunities. Addressing security challenges,

he acknowledged the sacrifices of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's people, especially in merged districts, in the fight against terrorism. Despite limited federal support for rehabilitating war-torn areas, the provincial government is utilizing its resources to restore infrastructure in the merged districts. The Chief Minister informed that his government had established debt management fund with a fund of Rs. 50 billions to strengthen provincial institutions financially.

Gandapur termed corruption as a big challenge of Pakistan, and highlighted the need of a such a system where there is no room for corruption. "We need a framework that blocks all avenues for corruption," he said, stressing that political differences should not hinder collective efforts for national progress. "While political disagreements will persist, we must unite for the country's interest. Political parties and leaders must embrace democratic values and dialogue to address national challenges," he added. The meeting concluded with a consensus on collaborative efforts to promote peace, development, and a conducive political environment. The YPF delegation praised the Chief Minister's initiatives to combat terrorism, foster governance reforms, and create employment opportunities for youth through modern training programs.

PHC grants protective & transit bails to 17 PTI's leaders

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) has granted protective and transit bail to 17 leaders of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) including former Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser, Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Babar Saleem Swati, and other Members of the National Assembly (MNAs) and three Members Provincial Assembly (MPAs) of Punjab Assembly, on Tuesday.

PHC's Chief Justice Ishfaq Ibrahim heard protective bail pleas of former Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser and Muhammad Bashir while a two-member bench comprising Justice Sahibzada Asadullah and Justice Waqar Ahmed, heard the petitions filed by the PTI leaders and lawmakers.

The petitioners' lawyer, Alam Khan Adeenzai informed the court that the petitioners were facing several cases registered against them in various stations across the country, following the November 24 protests.

The lawyer argued that the petitioners were innocent and had been falsely implicated in the cases. He requested the court to grant protective bail to the petitioners, enabling them to appear before the relevant courts and face the charges against them.

The Peshawar High Court, after hearing the arguments, granted protective bail to the petitioners, including Asad Qaiser, Babar Saleem Swati, Deputy Speaker Suria Begum, Sanam Javed, MNAs Junaid Akbar, Muhammad Bashir, Salim Rehman, Suhail Sultan, Arbab Jandad, Sajid Khan, Shafiuallah, Sahibzada Sabgitullah, Mahmood Shah, and others. The court directed the petitioners to appear before the relevant courts within a specified timeframe.

In another case, the Peshawar High Court granted protective bail to PTI leader Sanam Javed, directing her to appear before the Lahore High Court for further redressal of grievance. Similarly, the court granted protective bail to Punjab Assembly members Muhammad Ahmad Chatha, Asif Ali, and Muhammad Ahsan Awam, directing them to appear before the relevant courts within a specified timeframe.

PHC suspends notice to Atif Khan

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice Sahibzada Asadullah and Justice Waqar Ahmad suspended anti-corruption notice issued to Member National Assembly (MNA) and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Atif Khan and has directed the provincial government and the Anti-Corruption Establishment for submission of their responses, on Tuesday.

The counsel Shumail Butt advocate informed the court that Anti-Corruption issued notice to the petitioner, directing him to respond to allegations regarding the Malam Jabba scandal. He argued that the notice was issued despite the fact that the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) had already investigated the matter and found no evidence of wrongdoing.

The NAB had closed the inquiry, and the Peshawar High Court had also validated the NAB's decision, the counsel argued. The lawyer further argued that petitioner is being targeted for political purposes, and the anti-corruption notice was an attempt to damage his reputation.

The court was also informed that the land in question was purchased by the petitioner's ancestors in 1964, and the agriculture officer had confirmed that the land was not being used for agricultural purposes. The Peshawar High Court suspended the anti-corruption notice and directed the provincial government and the anti-corruption department to submit their responses.

Govt committed to provision of equal rights to all citizens

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday said that the government was committed to provision of equal opportunities to all communities living in Pakistan so that they could excel in different fields of life by protecting their basic human rights.

Addressing a ceremony held here in connection with the observance of International Human Rights Day, the prime minister said that the day highlighted the government's commitment towards upholding the great cause of human rights and protecting them, besides empowering those communities of the country that needed protection under the challenging circumstances.

He said that all the communities living in Pakistan enjoyed equal rights. "It is our priority and the government is committed to providing opportunities to all on equal basis," he added. About 1400 years back, Islam and the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him), had enunciated the contours of basic human rights and equality of humans, he said, adding the Founder Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, in his historic speech on 11 August, had emphasized upon the equal rights of all citizens regardless of the creed, cast and religion.

The prime minister stressed that today, they committed themselves to do more in this regard to be

able to stand with pride in front of nation, posterity and the entire humanity. "It is a long journey to traverse, he said, adding that with collective efforts, they should move ahead; thrash out issues and carve out their way for their future generation and to meet the expectations of the people of the country.

The prime minister further recollected that as chief minister Punjab, though it was not his constitutional responsibility, he also supported residents of other provinces with various educational and financial initiatives. He mentioned the steps taken during his tenures as chief minister which included Punjab Endowment Fund, award of scholarships and laptops on merit, in which all the provinces, Gilgit Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir were included.

He also referred to establishment of center against women violence in Multan, Zaiwer-e-Taleem programme with scholarship in Southern Punjab, and initiatives to end brick kilns child labour. About 90,000 children were forced to brick kiln labour who were later enrolled in schools, he added. Recently, the prime minister said, the federal government was sending 1,000 graduates from all parts of the country, including Gilgit Baltistan, to China to seek highest technical knowledge and education.

He also assured the law minister to take up the issue

of stranded Pakistanis with his counterpart in Malaysia. The prime minister commended the efforts of law minister and other stakeholders for the promotion and protection of human rights. Minister for Law, Justice and Human Rights Azam Nazeer Tarar, in his remarks, said that on 10 December, 1948, the world adopted the human rights declaration ensuring that there would be no discrimination among humans.

He said almost all the provisions of the universal declaration were based upon the teachings of Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and were also incorporated in the Constitution of Pakistan. The minister reiterated commitment to remove the disparity among the society by upholding the basic human rights and stressed that they all had to discharge this onus as a mission.

He highlighted that the Ministry of Human Rights, in collaboration with all the provincial governments and Gilgit Baltistan, had been working on the set targets regarding women's rights. Azam Nazeer Tarar mentioned achievements of his ministry in the realms of legislation over human rights which included, Zainab Alert, Response and Recovery Alert, Legal Aid and Justice Authority, Awaz app, 24/7 help services over legal issues, and functioning of different commissions including the human rights, and the status of women etc.

SC fixes Imran's plea for hearing

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The constitutional bench of the Supreme Court (SC) on Tuesday fixed former premier and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan's plea seeking formation of judicial commission to probe May 9 events by removing the reservations of the Registrar Office.

A seven-member constitutional bench, presided over by Justice Aminuddin Khan, conducted hearing of the case. Other members of the bench included Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Syed Hasan Azhar Rizvi, Justice Naem Akhtar Afghan, and Justice Shahid Bilal Hassan. PTI leader and prominent lawyer Hamid Khan represented the former premier in the case.

Khan argued that the country was under an undeclared Martial Law as no one dared probe what actually happened on May 9, adding that the army was called every now and then to 'normalise' the situation. Justice Mandokhail

remarked: "You are giving a sweeping statement about the Martial Law". Justice Mazhar added that the petitioner should also challenge the Article 245 of the constitution under which the army was called.

Advocate Khan replied that hundreds of FIRs were registered after May 9, contending that the PTI was being pushed against the wall. Justice Mandokhail asked why the petitioner did not approach the high court to which Khan replied that it was matter of whole Pakistan but the Registrar Office was objecting to that. Subsequently, Justice Aminuddin removed the reservations of the registrar and fixed the case for hearing.

Besides, Justice Aminuddin inquired whether the government was genuinely interested in pursuing the contempt petition against the former premier. Additional Attorney General (AAG) Amir Rehman replied that the federal government was serious about pursuing the contempt case against the incarcerated former premier, arguing that the PTI

founder violated a court order during the long march on May 25, 2022.

Justice Aminuddin noted that if the court had issued a notice, the PTI founder would have to appear in person before the court while directing the additional attorney general to look into the modalities for presenting the jailed former prime minister in court. Justice Mandokhail stressed that contempt cases were strictly a matter between court and the accused. He asked the parties not to become emotional in this regard.

PTI Secretary General Salman Akram Raja, who is also counsel for the PTI founder, told court that Khan had already submitted a response in this respect. He contended that the court's oral order had not reached the PTI founder, citing disruption of mobile services, which had caused hindrance in communication between the legal team and their client. Later, the constitutional bench adjourned the hearing for an indefinite period.

Syria's opposition begins government formation

DAMASCUS: Syria's opposition forces are in talks to take formal control of the country after a sweeping offensive that captured swaths of territory, including Damascus, and ousted longtime President Bashar al-Assad. Opposition leader Ahmed al-Sharaa, also known as Abu Mohammed al-Julani, met outgoing Prime Minister Mohammed al-Jalali on Monday to discuss the transition. Al-Jalali, who served under al-Assad, has agreed to transfer power to Hayat Tahrir al-Sham's (HTS) Syrian Salvation Government (SSG).

"We are working to ensure the transitional period is quick and smooth," al-Jalali was quoted as saying. The transitional government is to be formed by Mohammed al-Bashir, who is close to the HTS – the group that led the Damascus takeover – and heads their Idlib-based SSG. Geir Pedersen, United Nations special envoy to Syria, called for a transition process that ensures the continuity of Syria's institutions and allows its people to "chart the path to meeting their legitimate aspirations ... and restore a unified Syria".

Once formed, the new

government is likely to prioritise consolidating control over newly gained territories, reshaping government institutions and repatriating Syrian exiles and the displaced, Stephen Zunes, a professor of politics at the University of San Francisco, told Al Jazeera. The rapid advance of HTS-led opposition forces marks a generational turning point in the country's 13-year civil war. The conflict had claimed hundreds of thousands of lives, caused one of the largest refugee crises in modern history, reduced cities to rubble and triggered global sanctions that devastated the economy.

While clinging to power, al-Assad faced accusations from rights groups of brutal crackdowns, including killings, torture and forced disappearances, as well as using chemical weapons against Syria's population. "People are wondering what the new order will look like," Al Jazeera's Resul Serdar, reporting from Damascus, said, adding that a fragmented opposition could ignite intense political jockeying.

"Security is one of the main concerns." An onslaught of Israeli attacks that have hammered the

country's military sites over the past two days is creating a "huge challenge" for them, he added. In charting a new course, HTS, a former al-Qaeda affiliate, has sought to moderate its headline views, offering amnesty for soldiers conscripted under al-Assad's regime and pledging protection for religious minorities.

However, the new leadership has assured to seek "just retribution" for senior military and security officials implicated in war crimes. "We will not hesitate to hold accountable the criminals, murderers, security and army officers involved in torturing the Syrian people," al-Sharaa said, offering rewards for information on those responsible for abuses.

This is a "historic new beginning for the Syrian people who have suffered unspeakable violence and atrocities over the past 14 years," said the UN Commission of Inquiry on Syria. "It is incumbent on those now in charge to ensure that such atrocities are never again repeated." "The most important step is justice, and not retribution," said Agnes Callamard, head of the rights group Amnesty International. — Aljazeera

Govt sends fresh draft of Madrassah Registration Bill to Fazl

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: As differences persist between the government and JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman over the registration of religious seminaries, the former has once again swung into action to win the support of the JUI-F chief for the madrassah registration bill as it has sent its fresh draft to him. New draft contained some changes to the bill.

They disclosed that the party, in its reply, had told the government that it would discuss features of the draft with ulama at the Wifaqul Madaris meeting to be held on December 17. JUI-F lawyer Kamran Murtaza would brief the meeting on it, sources said, adding it would be after consultations with religious scholars that the party would give its reply to the government besides chalking out a strategy for the future.

On Monday, Maulana Fazl had said that the party wanted the registration of religious seminaries in the country, but the government was making the matter controversial. Addressing a press conference, Fazl said that the JUI-F did not want confrontation with the government, but only registration of the seminaries.

He said that the JUI-F was fighting for the madrassahs. "And this war the party has waged is not for its own benefit," he clarified. He lamented that today the government by convening a meeting of a group of Ulama tried to create divisions between two groups of religious scholars. "The government is trying to lead the nation astray by pitting two groups of religious scholars against each other," he alleged.

Earlier, a conference of ulama, mashaikh and government ministers regarding reforms in madaris was held in Islamabad in which participants stressed that the issue of registration of seminaries should not be politicized. The important meeting on madrassah registration and reforms took place in Islamabad on Monday, bringing together prominent scholars and religious leaders from all schools of thought across Pakistan.

Pak Navy ship Saif conducts exercises with Oman ship

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Navy Ship SAIF conducted Joint Patrol and Passage Exercise with Royal Navy of Oman Vessel (RNOV), AL SEEB and Spanish Navy Ship SANTA MARIA. Exercises were aimed to develop synergy and mutual understanding between Navies operating in the region while demonstrating interoperability to undertake Joint Operations.

The exercise between Royal Navy of Oman Ship AL SEEB, Pakistan Navy Ship SAIF and Pakistan Maritime Security Agency Ship KASHMIR was conducted during Focused Operation 'KARAKORAM RESOLVE' under Pakistan led Combined Task Force (CTF-150).

Pakistan Navy and Royal Navy of Oman share a history of operating together for



promoting regional peace and stability; wherein regular visits and interaction are being conducted between both navies. In addition, Pakistan Navy and Royal Navy of Oman regularly conduct Bilateral Exercise THAMAR AL TAYYIB to enhance mutual cooperation and understanding between brotherly navies.

Upon culmination of Focused Operation

'KARAKORAM RESOLVE'; PNS SAIF also conducted exercise with Spanish Navy Ship SANTA MARIA and rehearsed various maritime operations to enhance interoperability. Pakistan Navy has always been at the forefront of international efforts towards Maritime Security by maintaining permanent presence in the vital areas of Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

Israeli forces kill 34 people in Gaza

CAIRO (Reuters): Israeli strikes across the Gaza Strip killed at least 34 Palestinians overnight and on Tuesday, medics said, as Israeli tanks pushed into areas in central and southern parts of the enclave. An Israeli airstrike killed at least 25 people in Beit Hanoun in northern Gaza, where Israeli forces have operated since October, and injured dozens of others in a multi-floored building, medics said.

The Palestinian Civil Emergency said most of those killed were from the same family, including women and children. Images posted online, which Reuters couldn't immediately verify, showed the bodies lined up in a single mass grave in the town. Another airstrike on a house in the Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza killed at least seven people. It wounded several others, medics and the Palestinian Civil Emergency Service said, while another killed two people in Rafah south of the enclave.

In Deir Al-Balah near the coast, Israeli naval forces detained six Palestinian fishermen who tried to sail into the Mediterranean Sea earlier on Tuesday, according to residents. Gunmen led by the Palestinian militant group Hamas killed some 1,200

people and took over 250 hostages back to Gaza when they attacked Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, according to Israeli tallies. More than 44,700 Palestinians have been killed in the 14-month-old Israeli military campaign on Gaza that has followed, Gaza health authorities say.

Ceasefire efforts by Arab mediators Egypt and Qatar, backed by the United States, have failed to find agreement, but recent signs of optimism among Israeli and Palestinian officials have suggested a deal to end the war could be closer. On Monday night, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Hamas' increasing isolation after the downfall of Syria's Bashar Assad could open the door to a deal to return hostages but it was too early to say if efforts would succeed. On Tuesday, a Hamas official declined to disclose the content of negotiations but told Reuters mediators had recently stepped up their efforts, citing the group's willingness to show the flexibility needed "to end the aggression on our people."

A Palestinian official with knowledge of the mediation effort said Hamas had asked other Gaza factions to list the names of Israeli and foreign hostages in their custody,

whether dead or alive, signalling potential progress in the talks. Hamas wants a deal that ends the war and sees the release of Israeli and foreign hostages held captive in Gaza as well as Palestinians jailed by Israel, while Netanyahu has vowed the war can only end once Hamas is eradicated.

This year has been "particularly deadly" for journalists with 104 killed worldwide, over half of them being in Gaza, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) said Tuesday. The toll for 2024 is down on the 129 deaths in 2023 but still makes it "one of the worst years" on record, IFJ general secretary Anthony Bellanger told AFP.

According to the figures collated by the press group 55 Palestinian media workers were killed in 2024 in the face of Israel's offensive in Gaza. "Since the start of the war on 7 October 2023, at least 138 Palestinian journalists have been killed," the federation said. Bellanger condemned the "massacre that is happening before the eyes of the world." He said that "many journalists were targeted" in Gaza deliberately, while others had found themselves "in the wrong place, at the wrong time" in the fighting.