

NADRA DG dismissed
F.P. Report
RAWALPINDI: The Director General of NADRA, Zulfiqar Ahmed, has been dismissed from his position after being found guilty of possessing a fake MBA degree. The president of the American university that allegedly issued the degree did not exist. Additionally, discrepancies were found in his BBA degree, as the name of the college was different at the time the degree was issued.



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PM directs further cut in power tariff

— stresses prioritizing low-cost power projects

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday directed the relevant authorities to further reduce power tariffs and expedite the implementation process of the action plan of the future power generation projects.

Chairing a meeting to evaluate and discuss the future electricity and power plans of country, the prime minister stressed to prioritize the low-cost power projects based on local resources. During the meeting, the prime minister was informed about the progress of the ongoing hydro power projects across the country.

PM Shehbaz said that the low-cost power project produce environment friendly and affordable electricity. He further directed that the current electricity generation capacity should also be shifted to solar energy. Globally, electricity is being produced from environmentally friendly, low-cost solar energy, he noted, adding that Pakistan was fortunate in this regard as the country had vast potential for solar energy.

The prime minister was also briefed on the progress of phasing out inefficient power plants that consume more fuel but produce less electricity. He ordered the immediate closure of such outdated power plants adding that closing these plants would not only save valuable foreign exchange, but also reduce electricity costs for consumers.

The Prime Minister instructed that immediate action be taken against all officials deliberately obstructing reforms in the power sector. He also directed that reforms in the electricity transmission system be expedited. The power transmission system should be upgraded according to international standards, the prime minister further directed.

He further directed swift implementation of a system based on modern technology for the selection and transmission of low-cost electricity. The prime minister issued instructions to complete all measures for the reform of the power sector

within the specified timeline. The meeting was attended by Federal Ministers Ahad Khan Cheema, Sardar Awaish Khan Leghari, Dr Musadik Malik, Minister of State Ali Pervaiz Malik and other relevant high officials.

Meanwhile, Energy Minister of Tajikistan Daler Jumma called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif at the PM House and discussed matters of mutual interests. During the meeting, regional connectivity projects, including CASA-1000, were discussed.

Both sides agreed to further promote cooperation in sectors such as communications, particularly land-based connectivity, energy, education, and agriculture. Daler Jumma is visiting Pakistan to participate in the Pakistan-Tajikistan Joint Commission. The prime minister welcomed Daler Jumma to Pakistan and expressed satisfaction with the progress made in bilateral cooperation between the two countries in various sectors during the Joint Commission.

Recalling his visit to Tajikistan and his recent meetings with Tajik President Emomali Rahmon in Riyadh and Baku, the prime minister extended his best wishes to the Tajik President and expressed hope that President Rahmon would visit Pakistan soon. He expressed satisfaction with the memorandums of understanding (MOUs) and agreements reached during his visit and emphasized that timely implementation of these agreements would further strengthen bilateral relations.

The Tajik Minister thanked the Prime Minister for the warm welcome and hospitality and emphasized the importance of enhancing relations and cooperation between the two countries. The meeting was also attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Minister for investment and communications Abdul Aleem Khan, Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema, Minister for Energy Awaish Ahmed Leghari, Minister for Petroleum Musadik Malik, Advisor to the PM Tariq Fatemi and relevant government officials.

43 terrorists killed in IBOs

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: At least 43 terrorists have been sent to hell by the Security Forces during extensive Intelligence Based Operations (IBOs) conducted in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan causing a major setback to Fitna-Al-Khwarij & other terrorist groups operating in Balochistan.

On night 12-13 December, security forces conducted an IBO in Lakki Marwat District. Own troops effectively engaged the khwarij location and resultantly six khwarij were killed. Since 9 December 24, eighteen khwarij have been sent to hell in KP Province.

In Balochistan, on 13 December, the security forces, after an intense fire exchange, successfully neutralized ten terrorists in two separate IBOs conducted in Musa Khel and Panjgur Districts. Since 9 December, twenty five terrorists have been sent to hell in Balochistan.

These operations will continue till peace in the area is restored and khawrij are eliminated, as the security forces of Pakistan are determined to wipe out the menace of terrorism from the country.

President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday paid tribute to the security forces for conducting successful operations against Khawarij terrorists in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces.

In separate statements, the president and the prime minister commended the security forces for killing 43 Khawarij terrorists in various operations in district Panjgur, Musakhel, Lakki Marwat and other areas during December 09, 2024 to date. President Zardari termed the elimination of the terrorists on such a large scale, a big success of the security forces. "The entire nation salutes the security forces and stands shoulder to shoulder with them," the prime minister said. They also expressed the determination to uproot the menace of terrorism from the country.

Syria war: 318 Pakistanis arrived

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Under the directives of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, 318 Pakistani citizens stranded in war-torn Syria were successfully evacuated and brought back to Pakistan via a special chartered flight.

It reports that flight, operated by a private Georgian airline, departed from Beirut and landed at Islamabad International Airport on December 13 at 1:15 am. Pakistan's ambassador to Lebanon, Salman Athar, along with the embassy staff, personally saw off the passengers at Beirut Airport. The evacuees included pilgrims and other citizens caught in Syria amid the ongoing conflict.



ISLAMABAD: Energy Minister of Tajikistan, Daler Juma called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

President raises concerns over Madrassa Registration Bill

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has raised objections to the Madrassa Registration Bill, citing the Pakistan Madrassa Education Board Ordinance 2001 and the Islamabad Capital Territory Trust Act 2020.

He argued that new legislation is unnecessary given the existing laws. The president highlighted contradictions in the bill's definition of madrassa and expressed concern about potential misuse if these are registered under societies act. He warned of risks to peace and sectarian harmony, global criticism, and potential implications for Pakistan's FATF ratings.

"If the existing procedure for madrassah registration is obviated, it could be perilous as it may invite Financial Action Task Force, Generalised System of Preferences-Plus and other international institutions to review their opinion about Pakistan," the president said that the preamble of the Societies

Registration Act specified its fields and madrassah education was not reflected in them. The president explained that one of the subjects was fine arts, including dancing, sculpturing, music, painting etc., and thus, including madrassah education in the law would contradict the preamble and could be challengeable in terms of Article 227 of the Constitution and vice versa.

Article 227 stipulates: "All existing laws shall be brought in conformity with the injunctions of Islam as laid down in the Holy Quran and Sunnah ... and no law shall be made which is repugnant to such injunctions." The president further said that the establishment of madrassahs under the act would make societies established under the law vulnerable to "further sectarianism and other divisive tendencies", saying that the formation of a madrassah under one society would mean that "few people would establish numerous Madrassahs under one society and it would create fiefdoms".

The reasons also pointed out various other procedural and drafting errors in the act. The bill in question was part of an agreement between JUI-F and the government in support of the 26th Amendment. The Societies Registration (Amendment) Act, 2024 extends the Societies Registration Act, 1860, and includes provisions for the registration of madrassahs under the relevant deputy commissioner office.

The bill specifies that a madrassah with more than one campus needs only one registration, and every madrassah must submit an annual report of its educational activities to the registrar. Additionally, each madrassah must have its accounts audited by an auditor and submit the audit report to the registrar. The bill also states that no madrassah should teach or publish literature that promotes militancy, sectarianism, or religious hatred. In October 2019, the PTI-led government transferred the registration of seminaries to the education departments.

SC grants mly courts permission to announce decisions of civilians

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In a landmark judgement, the Supreme Court's constitutional bench on Friday allowed military courts to announce the decisions in the cases of 85 civilians who are in the custody of Pakistan Army.

The constitutional bench, headed by Justice Aminuddin Khan, heard the petition against the trial of civilians in military courts. Other members of the bench are Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Musarrat Hilali, Justice Syed Hasan Azhar Rizvi, Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan, and Justice Shahid Bilal Hassan.

At the outset of hearing, Defence Ministry's counsel Khawaja Haris came to the rostrum to argue. Justice Mandokhail asked him whether invalidated provisions of the Army Act are in accordance with the constitution. He also questioned whether the Army Act could be amended to bring every individual [civilian] under its purview, considering that the Army Act was enacted before the 1973 Constitution.

Justice Mazhar inquired about the

reasons behind declaring the provisions unconstitutional in the judicial decision. Advocate Haris replied that there were flaws in the Supreme Court's decision. Justice Mandokhail remarked that the judicial decision should not be disrespected to the extent of calling it flawed. Haris apologized, stating that his words were not legally appropriate.

Justice Mazhar pointed out that he had asked for details regarding the events of May 9. But till now, the case only concerned the Corps Commander House. He asked if the case would be limited to the Corps Commander House. The Additional Attorney General stated that all the details had been received this morning and would be submitted separately.

Justice Hilali asked what would happen to the trials conducted under the provisions that were annulled. She noted that individuals may have already been sentenced under those provisions prior to May 9. Khawaja Haris replied that decisions made under those provisions are protected before the provisions are declared void. Justice remarked that this would be an act of discrimination against the accused.

Justice Mandokhail observed that

no one joins the Pakistan Army under duress. They are aware that the Army Act will apply to them, and under that law, basic rights are restricted. The Army Act was specifically enacted for the regulations and discipline of military service. Khawaja Haris replied that no one joins the army with the intention of committing a crime, and fundamental rights are suspended only when a crime is committed.

Justice Mandokhail asked whether the Supreme Court's review in an appeal would be limited to the petitioner's request, or whether the court could examine other aspects of the decision. Justice Khan responded that while the parties are restricted to their arguments, the court is not. The bench, in concluding remarks for the day, observed that the decisions of military courts would be conditional upon the decision of the pending case in the Supreme Court. The bench ordered that those accused who may be eligible for leniency in sentences would be released, while those who cannot be released will be sentenced and transferred to ordinary prisons. Later, the bench adjourned the hearing on the case until after the winter break.

Senate passes National Forensic Agency Bill, 2024

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Senate on Friday passed the National Forensics Agency Bill, 2024 unanimously with certain amendments to enhance forensic capabilities across Pakistan with key initiatives including establishing a digital forensic lab.

The bill, aimed at transforming the National Forensics Agency (NFA) project into a full-fledged, independent agency, was introduced by Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on October 17. "The NFA will integrate digital and cyber forensics to combat crimes involving electronic devices, deep fakes, and other electronic offenses," read a statement of aims and objectives of the bill.

Moreover, the NFA will also develop a center of excellence and R&D department to make it a self-sustainable agency. Furthermore, it will also envisage developing indigenous solutions to minimise

the dependence on foreign governments and agencies, it added. Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar piloted the bill in the upper house on behalf of the interior minister.

Sharing the details, Tarar said that through NFA, the existing conventional forensic labs would be upgraded and a digital forensic lab would be established "that will provide services to all provinces, GB, AJK, and government/private forensics labs". He said establishing an independent NFA in Pakistan is essential to address the challenges arising from the current fragmented forensic services that lead to inconsistent standards and capabilities across the country.

The minister said that currently, there was a forensic laboratory in Lahore — set up by incumbent Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif — in 2010. The laboratory had already overloaded and there was need of the hour that all provincial governments should also include setting up

such labs in their respective provinces, he added. He said that setting up a state-of-the-art forensic laboratory would also help eradicate crimes.

Sensors Qurat-ulain Marri and Zamir Hussain Ghumro moved their amendments passed by the Senate. Earlier, the federal government had proposed setting up a National Forensics and Cybercrime Agency (NFCA) to eradicate cybercrimes and other criminal activities through the use of artificial intelligence and smart digital technology.

A draft of the "National Forensics and Cybercrime Agency Act 2024" had also been prepared. The News reported in July. Besides using traditional methods of investigation including pathology, DNA analysis, toxicology, narcotics, fingerprints, serology, ballistics, explosives, odontology, document examination and crime scene investigation, the NFCA will investigate crime using artificial intelligence and smart digital technology.

Tarar for 'acceptable to all' AI regulatory framework

ISTANBUL (APP): Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar on Friday made a passionate call at an international conference to work out a comprehensive and inclusive AI regulatory framework which is "acceptable to all".

"As the world is progressing with the AI advancement, we must come up with a regulatory framework that upholds ethical standards and works for collective good of humanity which has common goals and objectives," said the minister while addressing the Startcom Summit 2024. "We must come together on common terms and make a regulatory framework which is acceptable to all," he said while advocating for encouraging the positive use of the AI, and discouraging the negative ones.

"What I would like to achieve from AI...in the field of agritech, we would like to have more productivity and high yield crops through inducement

of technology because we are rice exporting country and we have the agriculture as a backbone of economy," he said while underlining the need for AI advancement in education, skill development, fintech and healthcare sectors as well.

"With regard to education and skill development, we would like to see the AI advancement in distance learning so that those students who do not have access to these good universities could gain higher education," he said, adding the AI should be used in increasing the children enrolment in school, and eradicating the diseases like hepatitis and polio. He also stressed on the need of using the AI in combating the climate change, bolstering economy and curbing the misinformation and disinformation.

"We just need to make right kind of policies and benefit our people," he said while pointing out the biggest contemporary challenge in the form of misinformation and disinformation.



He cited the World Economic Forum where most of the leaders called misinformation a greatest threat as it led to chaos and anarchy.

The minister said the international fora could be used to deal with this challenge and an international agreement could be reached or task force could be established to deal with this challenge that eventually leads to economic instability, security crises that caused destruction beyond imagination. He also expressed reservation over the censorship of the issue related

to Gaza, Kashmir and Lebanon on social media. "AI is being used negatively there, and there is a selective judgement in this regard," he added.

The minister regretted that he was unable to mention name of martyr Burhan Wani on Social media and use his picture due to what he called "selective judgement". The people should be told about the humanitarian crises in Gaza, Kashmir and other countries, he added.

"In Pakistan, we have 111 million Internet users, about 45 per cent of our population.

Then, we have 71 million social media users, about 29 per cent of our population and mobile phone users are about 188 million," he said while highlighting the young population of Pakistan. "We have an opportunity and a challenge in the form of youth of this country. So we are trying to impart IT skills to the youth so they can not only be efficient in IT skills and AI at home but also abroad," the minister noted.

He also mentioned three policies for digital advancement including the National

Fiberization policy which is aimed at providing Internet to entire population in Pakistan. "Besides, we are moving towards 5G spectrum, that is our next target, we hope to achieve that by mid next year," he added.

In addition to that, he said the National Artificial Intelligence policy is being worked out which is in line with modern trends in the world and includes the best ethical standards. "So to tackle misinformation, we have to develop large language models, we have to go to natural language processing. So LLMs and NLPs have to be developed in order to cope with this challenge of misinformation and disinformation world over," he stressed.

"As far as our national AI policy is concerned, a big part of it going to focus on ethical part, so there is accuracy of historical data and accuracy of facts," he said, highlighting the fact check Forum created by the Ministry of Information that actually verifies certain facts

which has not only AI as integral part but also human intervention that oversees that AI module. "In addition to that, we are running two more programmes. We have Directorate of Electronic Media and Publications which monitors the opinions and narratives world over and within our own country and comes up with the strategic communication policy for the government."

"We are using our own AI engine for that to improve our strategic communication," he remarked. He said the government of Pakistan had also established a counter violent extremism cell. "As far as fintech, agritech, healthcare and govtch areas are concerned, we are implementing our AI policy but we are first coming up with framework so that it is verified and based on accurate data to combat misinformation and disinformation," the minister noted. "We are fully committed to AI policy with best ethical standards," he concluded.

Chinese, Pakistani diplomats sign MoUs in various sectors

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Chinese and Pakistani diplomats signed memorandums of understanding (MoUs) for five projects in transport, health, energy, and agriculture in Karachi, with support from the Sindh government. The agreements include local assembly of electric cars, local manufacturing of solar panels, production of slow-release fertilizers, algae farming, and the establishment of a medical city in the Dhabaji Special Economic Zone.

Chinese and Pakistani investors will sign an MoU that has been proposed by Pakistan Renewable Energy Resources. Sindh Energy Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah hosted this signing ceremony in the office at which this was held, and were Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon and Sindh Special Assistant to Chief Minister Syed Qasim Naveed Qamar who attended.

On this auspicious occasion of the signing of MoU with Chinese investors, while speaking with the media, Sindh Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit, Sharjeel Inam Memon, maintained that a delegation of investors from China had visited Sindh and had a meeting with Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah.

He said that the Sindh government would provide all possible help to Chinese investors in any field they would like to invest. The investors also met

with former President Asif Ali Zardari, where the Chinese ambassador was also present. During the meeting, Asif Ali Zardari assured that the governments of Pakistan and Sindh would provide full support to Chinese investors wherever they choose to invest in the country.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the friendship of China and Pakistan is of exemplary nature. He said that Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto had laid its foundation. He said that in 2008, during the PPP government, President Asif Ali Zardari had started the project of CPEC. He said that China is the destination of his most frequent visits. Despite the opposition at that time, President Zardari envisioned CPEC not just as a corridor but as a way to bring the two nations closer and enhance Pakistan's economy. He mentioned that Chinese investors have expressed interest in investing in various sectors. Special Assistant to the Chief Minister, Syed Qasim Naveed Qamar, accompanied the delegation on a visit to the Dhabaji Special Economic Zone, where the investors showed significant interest and expressed a desire to establish industries. He noted that the Dhabaji Economic Zone is the only zone connected to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that Pakistan has attained the top position in global rankings for Public

Private Partnerships, which he credited to Sindh province. He explained that Sindh has executed and implemented major projects through the Public-Private Partnership model. He said several such mega initiatives are working well across the province.

He said investors have shown interest in setting up a state-of-the-art medical city in Pakistan, and the Sindh government has assured them of all possible support. He also mentioned the government's initiative to launch EV (electric vehicle) taxis to create employment opportunities for youth. The government has issued a notification for the launch of a scheme following the directives of Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and former President Asif Ali Zardari. It will provide livelihood opportunities to thousands of youth in the country. This taxi service will help the environment by reducing emissions and providing transport facilities to passengers at cheaper rates. The head of the investment department explained the key position of the investment department throughout the process. He welcomed Qasim Naveed Qamar, who has worked commendably since taking charge and deserves appreciation. The minister stated that their aim was to increase the relationship between the businessmen of Pakistan and China, so they could easily exchange business models and, thus, benefit from this relation.

He said that the visit of



Chinese investors was successful, and he added that China is a brotherly country with which Pakistan has excellent relations. He said that China has always supported Pakistan in difficult times. He further said that the establishment of more industries would lead to more employment opportunities. He said that the creation of a medical city alone would provide jobs to fifty thousand people. He said that Pakistan cannot rely on government jobs and has to expand the industrial opportunities. While responding to a question, Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the Sindh government would provide full cooperation

to the investors for this medical city.

He mentioned that an MoU was being signed for this project and said that products made in Pakistan would also be exported to other countries, which will benefit the country. He also highlighted that there is a ten-year tax exemption for industries established in the Dhabaji Economic Zone, which provides significant relief to businessmen. This initiative is intended to support all investors who choose to do business in the Dhabaji Special Economic Zone. Special Assistant to the Chief Minister Qasim Naveed Qamar said that granite was being exported

from Pakistan, and after processing in other countries, was sold back in the local market. He emphasized that the government would make all efforts to ensure that granite processing is carried out within Pakistan itself.

He pointed to another query that Pakistan has vast stores of natural wealth, recalling that Thar granite material has been utilized for the construction of the FTC building. Mr. Memon further points out that the Thar region has reserves of tens of billions of tons of coal, where, under the estimates of the experts this coal can generate economical electricity by which it will be

well sold for at least a couple of centuries.

Speaking at a press conference, Minister for Energy and Planning and Development Syed Nasir Hussain Shah said fertilization is a prime requirement.

He said that a coal gasification plant would be erected on 200 acres of land, which would greatly add to the energy production. The solar parks are also being erected, which would be a great help for the energy sector. He underscored that the electricity produced from coal would prove to be more crucial in filling up the energy deficit of the country. He said that the government of Sindh will fix the rates of electricity produced through solar parks, and people will be able to buy electricity at Rs 18 per unit from those parks. Electricity rates will be fixed by SEPR (Sindh Energy Power Regulatory Authority) and STDC (Sindh Transmission and Distribution Company).

Syed Nasir Hussain Shah said in reply to a question that there are three federal representatives in K-Electric, but no one from Sindh. He elaborated that though there is a mechanism for load shedding and tariffs, the Sindh has no representation as a result of which, the province has no say in the decision-making process. He further highlighted that the Sindh government desires that cheap electricity be made accessible to the public, and it is also the vision of Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

Sindh government fully cognisant of its obligations

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Sindh government has been extending the best possible support to Rescue 1122 and KMC's Fire Department to protect lives and properties whenever fire emergencies threaten Karachi's high-rises and industries.

Sindh Minister for Planning & Development and Energy Minister, Syed Nasir Hussain Shah, stated this while speaking as the chief guest at the 14th Fire Safety & Security Convention-2024 organised by the National Forum for Environment and Health (NFEH).

The Planning and Development Minister stated that the provincial government has been meeting the needs of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation and the Rescue 1122 service. This effort ensures that both agencies have access to the latest firefighting and rescue equipment and machinery, helping to minimize losses during fire emergencies, he added.

He said the provincial government was fully cognisant of its obligations in this regard but it was equally important that concerned businessmen and industrialists should also show responsibility to pre-empt fire emergencies. He said the industries and multi-storied commercial buildings in Karachi should have adequate safety arrangements against fire incidents.

These safety measures should have been taken given the recurring fire emergencies in Karachi causing massive loss of lives and precious properties, he said.

The Planning and Development Minister proposed the formation of a task force to implement fire safety laws by industries and businesses in Karachi. He said the proposed task force should comprise representatives of the government, relevant civic agencies, industrialists and businessmen to discuss and finalise the strategy to ensure compliance with the fire safety laws by the private sector.

Ahmed Azeem Alvi, President SITE Association of Industry, suggested that the curriculum for school education and vocational training in Pakistan should include fire safety as a compulsory subject to ensure that the younger generation is trained to deal with fire emergencies. He said the government should incentivise small businesses and industries to adopt the fire safety protocol to protect their workforce and assets.

Alvi suggested that the relevant government agencies and representatives of the businesses and industries should enhance their coordination to prevent fire emergencies in urban areas. Junaid Naqi, President of the Korangi Association of Trade & Industry, said that



fire safety laws should be taught to school-going children in Pakistan like Japanese students compulsorily are trained to deal with earthquake disasters.

He urged the industries to adopt safety laws and the latest technology to prevent the loss of precious lives of labourers due to fire emergencies. Rehana Yasmeen, Rescue Commander at Sindh Emergency Rescue Service, said the Rescue 1122 service in Sindh had so far attended to over 700,000 cases of medical emergencies and 22,000 road traffic accidents to save precious lives in distress.

NOTICE FOR AUCTION OF MINOR MINERALS OF DISTRICT BANNU AS "ONE-UNIT"

The District Auction Committee of District Bannu invites applications from registered contractors of Minor Minerals for participation in auction and grant of Minor Mineral leases of the following 09 identified blocks as "One Unit" in District Bannu under provisions of Section-78 Sub Section (3) of The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mines & Mineral Act, 2017 for a period of one year on the basis of "As is where is" against reserve prices Rs.2,01,52,000/- and call deposit of Rs.50,38,000/- in office of the Deputy Commissioner Bannu on 16/01/2025 at 11:00 AM. In case of non-auction due to any reason, the next date of auction will be 20/01/2025 at 11:00 AM or 23/01/2025 at 11:00 AM.

S.No.	Location & Extant of Area	Acreeage
1	Near Village Ghulam Killa, Sheri Killa, Kot Barara, Kabir Killa, Silma Sikandar Khel, District Bannu. MDW/BU/MM/(01)/2015	3028.99 acres
2	Near Village Dwa Manzi, Shah Jamal Ziyarat, Kot Sadat, District Bannu. MDW/BU/MM/(02)/2015	2112.720 acres
3	Near Village Shah Hussain, Miri Khel, Baik Khel, Chaki Azim, Jower Nala, Kashu, Tehsil Domel, District Bannu. MDW/BU/MM/(03)/2015	476.71 acres
4	Near Village Dandi Killa, Link Road Chowk, Tehsil Domel, District Bannu. MDW/BU/MM/(04)/2016	302.89 acres
5	Near Village Marghali, Tehsil Domel, D istrict Bannu. MDW/BU/MM/(05)/2018	2250.318 acres
6	Near Village Kurram Garhi, Azal Shah Garhi, Tehsil & District Bannu. MDW/BU/MM/(06)/2020	1698.76 acres
7	Near Village Sirki Khel Wazir, Tehsil Domel, District Bannu. MDW/BU/MM/(07)/2020	828.26 acres
8	Near Village Barmi Khel, Gango Nala, District Bannu. MDW/BU/MM/(08)/2020	1634.44 acres
9	Near Village Jhando Khel, Tatar Khel, Raaz Gul, Shamshi Khel, Shah Nawaz District Bannu. MDW/BU/MM/(09)/2013	1989.17 acres

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- Only those persons or firms registered with Directorate General Mines & Minerals Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as Minor Minerals Contractors can participate in auction. Interested parties can register themselves in the Directorate General Mines & Minerals Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- The registered parties/individuals shall submit application form at the cost of Rs.10,000/- (Ten thousand) non-refundable on any working day at least three (03) days before the auction. Last date for submission of application form is 13/01/2025 at 5:00 P.M.
- Blacklisted / Defaulter persons or those persons who are not registered with Directorate General Mines and Minerals are not allowed to participate in the auction.
- The interested parties can visit and check the advertised areas before the auction for their satisfaction. The sketches of the areas are available for the interested parties in the office of the Assistant Director (Tech) Mineral Development Bannu. The successful bidder shall strictly work inside the above mention 09 blocks.
- Call deposit shall be deposited under account No.0066-2008140092 and application fee under account No.0066-2008209319 in any branch of Bank of Khyber.
- The registered applicants/parties shall also submit attested copies of CNIC, income tax registration certificate (NTN) and partnership deed/article or memorandum of association along with evidence of paid-up capital (if applicant is partnership firm/company).
- The successful bidders shall deposit 1/4th of the total bid money as security within three days from the date of auction, otherwise, call deposit shall be forfeited in favour of the Government and the bid of second highest bidder shall be considered as highest bid, subject to condition that the difference between the first and the second highest bids is not more than 10 percent of the highest bid.
- The successful bidder shall demarcate his leased area of all the 09 blocks within fifteen days from the date of issuance of Allotment Letter on his own expenses and will work inside the said blocks.
- The successful bidder shall be bound to pay Excise duty to Commissionerate of Mines or its approved excise duty collection contractor on government notified rates.
- The successful bidder before issuance of allotment letter shall be bound to deposit withholding tax under Rule-236-A of ITO 2011 with Income Tax Department and Professional Tax as per rules to the Excise & Taxation Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- The successful bidder will be bound to pay surface rent to the land owner under the provisions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mines & Minerals Act, 2017.
- The successful bidder shall be responsible to work in leased area strictly in accordance with the provisions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mines & Minerals Act, 2017.
- The successful bidder shall be bound to use only verified challans for transportation of minor minerals duly verified by the concerned Assistant Director. Transportation without a verified transit challan shall be considered as unauthorized transportation and action under section-56 of the Ibit Act shall be initiated against the lessee as well as other offenders.
- The Licensing Authority reserves the right to accept or reject any bid with cogent reasons.
- The successful bidder shall be bound to carry out mining activities in the granted area/ blocks as per the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mining of Minor Minerals from River Bed Rules-2022 as directed by Honorable Peshawar High Court Peshawar in its decision dated 15/08/2023.
- Other information in this regard can be obtained from the office of the undersigned during office time i.e. 09:00 AM to 05:00 PM on any working day.

Assistant Director (Tech)
Minerals Development Bannu

INF(P) 3381/24

F.P. Report

MULTAN: The Multan Development Authority (MDA) has continue crackdown on anti-encroachment across the city under the directives of Director General Rana Saleem Ahmed Khan here on Friday.

MDA enforcement teams successfully removed illegal encroachments from several key areas, including Shah Rukn-e-alam, T Chowk,

Madni Chowk, Sabzi mandi, General Bus Stand and Beg Chowk and surrounding areas.

According to an MDA spokesperson, these actions are part of the Punjab government's vision for a Cleaner and Greener Punjab, to ensuring the city remains organized and encroachment free. MDA teams have been conducting daily operations in various markets and streets to enforce these directives.

The spokesperson stressed that strict action will be taken against those involved in encroachments, urging citizens to support the initiative by discouraging elements involved in spoiling beauty of the city.

Meanwhile, the Customs Anti-Smuggling team conducted a successful raid at Multan Railway Station, seizing smuggled goods worth over Rs 30 million from Jaffar Express.

GOVERNMENT OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA COMMUNICATION & WORKS DEPARTMENT

NOTICE INVITING E-BIDDING

(Single Stage Single Envelop E-Bidding System)

The C&W Highway Division Mardan, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa invites Electronic Bids from eligible firms / contractors in accordance with KPRA Procurement Rules 2014, amended upto 15/09/2021 on **Single Stage Single Envelop** procedure for the following work(s).

S.No.	Name of Work	Required PEC Category	Bid Security i/c stamp Duty Rs. (M)	Tender FEE @ 0.03%	Period of completion	Last date and time of submission of E-bids	Date of Time of opening of Financial Bid
A	AC&MR of various roads in C&W Highway Division Mardan 2024-25 i. Maintenance & repair of Gaddar road. ii. Maintenance & Repair of Mardan Sawabi road to Fatima road. iii. Repair of Taj Hotel Pattak Chowk Mardan. iv. Main Rustam road to Hair Abad Jamia Masjid Tehsil Rustam District Mardan. v. Road from Mehmoor Abad Village to Janazagah Mardan vi. A. Mohabat Abad Bridge approaches. B. Sheikh Maltoon Banks in / outgate way. C. Sheikh Maltoon Sector Canal Bridge approaches Grave yard. D. Main Mayar road Madrasa. E. Landaki UC Cul Bagh Pipe culvert. F. Toru Nawa Kili Main road. G. Toru Nawa Kili Bridge. H. Hujra Muhammad Ali Khan road repair work. I. Toru Rasheed Abad road. ii. Bann Korona UC Jehangher Abad Mardan. iii. Khan Garhi Pump Korona road UC Jehangher Abad Mardan. iii. Repair & Maintenance of various roads UC Shergarh, Hatyan, Lund Khwar, Jalala, Qutabgarh, Main Essa & Parkho Umarabad District Mardan (Emergent Nature work). iv. Repair and Maintenance of various roads UC Shergarh, Hatyan, Lund Khwar, Jalala, Qutabgarh Main Essa & Parkho Umarabad District Mardan (Emergent Nature work). v. Alungung road total length (6.00 M) repair portion at different reaches (1.00-km) in District Mardan. District Development Initiatives in Mardan ADP No. 33624017 Sub Head: Construction / rehabilitation / Improvement & B/T of Doshera Chowk to Fazal-e-Haq College road (800-M) & Qadir Abad Koragah road (100-M). Sub Head: 1. Construction / Improvement of Faiz-Talab Banda road UC Madi Bada (450-M). 2. Construction / Improvement of Atzal Abad road to Mandoro Janazagah and Link road opposite to Janazagah road UC Atzal Abad UC Serbailo (500-M). 3. Construction & Rehab: of Pali Kili Chowk to Muzbana UC Takkar District Mardan (475-M). ADP Development Plan for Mardan Sub Head: Rehabilitation & Improvement of Platoo Bridge to Nawar Kili Kalpani Bridge District Mardan.	C-5 & above	1042500/-	15360/-	As per work order	08/01/2025 At 12:00 pm	08/01/2025 At 12:30 pm
1.		C-5 & above	738765/-	10800/-	As per work order	08/01/2025 At 12:00 pm	08/01/2025 At 12:30 pm
2.		C-5 & above	6179502/-	9000/-	As per work order	08/01/2025 At 12:00 pm	08/01/2025 At 12:30 pm
3.		C-5 & above	802326/-	11760/-	As per work order	08/01/2025 At 12:00 pm	08/01/2025 At 12:30 pm
4.		C-5 & above	418750/-	6000/-	As per work order	08/01/2025 At 12:00 pm	08/01/2025 At 12:30 pm

- Complete Detail of Bid Security in shape of CDR i.e Bank name, CDR Number(s) and Date(s) must be submitted electronically alongwith E-Bid on the E-bidding system.
- All bidders are required to be registered with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority under Finance Act, 2013 Act No. XXI of 2013.
- AS per KPRA Notification No. S.R.O (14) Vol: 1-24/2021-22/6058-71 dated 10/05/2022
i. The Contractors quoted their bids up to a limit of 10% below Engineer Estimate shall submit bid security @2% only of Engineer Estimate.
ii. The contractors quoting their bids more than 10% below upto 20% below on Engineer's Estimate shall submit along with their bids 8% Additional Security of Engineers Estimated Cost in addition to 2% bid security. If the bid is not accompanied with the required amount of additional security then it will be considered as non-responsive and the 2% bid security shall be forfeited in favour of Government and the second lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly.
iii. Similarly, a contractor quoted bid more than 20% below shall submit with his bid an additional security on engineer's Estimated cost equal to be differential amount of submitted bid and Engineer's Estimate along with detailed rate analysis". In case of more than 20% below bids. If the bid is not accompanied by the detailed rate analysis and / or required amount of additional security, then the said bid shall be considered as non-responsive. All the securities submitted along with such non-responsive bid shall be forfeited in favour of Government and the 2nd lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly.
iv. In case detailed rate analysis submitted with the bids is, in view of the of the procuring Entity, not convincing, the Head of Procuring Entity may declare such bid as non-responsive without any forfeiture of bid securities and record reasons thereof.
v. The procuring entity may offer the contract to next lowest bidder after due diligence in the context of financial difference between such two bids or may advertise procurement opportunity afresh.
vi. After commencement of work by the successful bidder, the procuring entity may replace Additional Security with a Bank Guarantee of the same amount from the scheduled bank, if the already deposited security is not in the form of bank guarantee.
vii. The Additional Security shall be released to the contractor in four instalments i.e 1st instalment of 25% to be released upon completion of 25% of the project 2nd instalment of 25% to be released upon completion of 50% of the project 3rd instalment of 25% to be released after 100% completion of the project.
- Venue of Bids opening is office of the Executive Engineer C&W Highway Division Mail road Mardan.

INF(P) 3371/24

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER | C&W HIGHWAY DIVISION MARDAN | Phone No. 0937-9230038



OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
COMMUNICATION & WORKS
DIVISION-I SWAT
Ph# 0946-9240117, Fax#9240005, Email: xen.cnwbswat@gmail.com

CORRIGENDUM
Tender called on 23/12/2024 by this office which advertised/published in the daily newspapers vide information Department Peshawar No. INF(P)3216/2024 dated: 01/12/2024 is hereby cancelled & Re-called on 01/01/2025, vide info No. INF(P)3275/24, in Daily Mashriq, dated: 07/12/2024 and Frontier News, dated 07/12/2024

ہندو امانت کرپشن فری پاکستان
Our Faith, Corruption Free Pakistan

INF(P)3391/
2024

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER

پبلک نوٹس (از دفتر ڈپٹی کمشنر صوابی)

پبلک شناختی کارڈ کی فہرست جو کہ نادرہ آفس سے موصول ہوا ہے ڈسٹرکٹ لیول کمیٹی ڈپٹی کمشنر صوابی میں زیر التوا ہے۔
ان سب کو بذریعہ نوٹس بذمہ اطلاع کیا جاتا ہے کہ ڈپٹی کمشنر آفس صوابی میں اپنے پبلک شناختی کارڈ کی کارروائی جلد از جلد مکمل بنائیں اور دفتر میں اپنے ثبوت کے ساتھ حاضر ہوں۔
اگر (14) چودہ ایام کے اندر حاضر نہیں ہوئے تو یہ تصور کیا جائے گا کہ ان سب کے پاس اپنے حق میں کوئی ثبوت / دلیل موجود نہیں ہے، اور ان کے کیس کا کیٹرف فیصلہ کر دیا جائے گا۔

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3368/24

ایڈیشنل ڈپٹی کمشنر (ریلیف اینڈ ہیومن ریشس) صوابی

Action urged against fake-finger marking by polio staff



F.P. Report
PESHAWAR: The Provincial Anti-Polio Task Force has decided to implement strict actions

to address fake finger marking by polio staff and non-compliance by government employees refusing polio vaccination for their children. Chairing

the high-level meeting held at the Civil Secretariat Peshawar, Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadeem Aslam

instructed relevant authorities to register criminal cases against individuals involved in fake finger marking and enforce disciplinary measures under

applicable rules and regulations. He also directed administrative secretaries and authorized officials to identify non-compliant

government employees, withdraw their benefits, and subject them to directly observed vaccination to ensure compliance. Comprehensive strategies were outlined to enhance vaccination efforts in polio-affected areas. These include engaging local communities and establishing vaccination points at transit locations, community Hujras, primary health centers, hospitals, and other facilities, in addition to door-to-door campaigns. The Chief Secretary emphasized the importance of meticulous monitoring and directed Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners to conduct field visits to oversee campaign activities. Daily schedules must be adhered to, and the

Provincial Monitoring and Reporting Unit (PMRU) will track progress to ensure punctual implementation. Outstanding performers during the campaign will be recognized with appreciation letters, while underperforming officials will be required to provide justifications. The Information and Public Relations Department was tasked with running an extensive awareness campaign on polio vaccination points to encourage direct public participation in polio vaccination efforts. Addressing the meeting, which was also attended by the Inspector General of Police Akhtar Hayat Khan, Chief Secretary Nadeem Aslam Chaudhary reiterated the provincial government's strong commitment to

eradicating polio. He emphasized the need for collective responsibility from all segments of society to achieve this critical public health goal. The meeting, attended by administrative secretaries, law enforcement officials, the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Coordinator, and representatives from UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO), also reviewed progress on previous decisions. Strategies were refined to address the recent surge in polio cases and strengthen ongoing eradication efforts. The National Polio Eradication Campaign, set to begin on December 16, aims to immunize 6.55 million children across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during the seven-day drive.

BoK partners with PGH to offer Islamic Banking solutions

F.P. Report
PESHAWAR: Bank of Khyber (BoK) has taken another step toward promoting financial inclusion by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Peshawar General Hospital (PGH). This strategic partnership reflects BoK's commitment to offering Shariah-compliant financial solutions tailored to meet the diverse needs of its partners. The MoU was signed by Mr. Abdullah Ghaffar, Group Head Islamic Banking, BoK, and Mr. Khurshid Ahmad, Hospital Director, PGH, in the presence of Mr. Hassan Raza, MD/CEO, BoK, alongside senior executives from both organizations. As part of this agreement, employees of PGH will have access to a variety of Islamic Consumer Finance products and serv-

Peshawar General hospital leads with over 1,200 Endoscopic Spine Surgeries
F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, nearly 1,200 successful surgeries have been performed so far using the modern treatment method of "Endoscopic Spine Surgery," specifically for patients with spinal disorders. In this advanced procedure, the patient is not put under anesthesia, and no part of the body is cut. Instead, a camera is inserted through a small incision to remove discs or fat. Dr. Muhammad Farooq, who works on this technique at Peshawar General Hospital, provided details to the media, stating that in the past, patients undergoing surgery for back pain would suffer intense discomfort and, in some cases, become permanently disabled. However, with Endoscopic Spine Surgery, there is no need to cut the back muscles, reducing the risk of complications. According to Dr. Farooq, back pain usually occurs when a person lifts heavy weights in an improper manner, which can cause leg pain and difficulty walking. This is treated with medication or physiotherapy, but if the problem persists, surgery becomes necessary. Endoscopic Spine Surgery does not involve any cuts to the body, which results in fewer effects on the patient's health and makes the procedure safer. Dr. Javed Malik, CEO of Peshawar General Hospital, stated that there is no shortage of skilled professionals in this field in Pakistan, but a conducive environment is needed to encourage their work. ices, including financing for houses, cars, motorcycles, and personal needs, on a priority and preferential basis. Mr. Irfan Nisar, Divisional Head Islamic Consumer Assets, provided a detailed briefing on these offerings, emphasizing how this collaboration will simplify access to Shariah-compliant financing for PGH employees. This partnership reinforces BoK's mission to empower individuals and institutions through innovative and ethical financial solutions, enhancing the convenience and trust for its valued customers.



PESHAWAR: Officials of Bank of Khyber and Peshawar General Hospital shaking hands after an MoU signing ceremony.

Politics of reconciliation vital for political harmony, economic growth

PESHAWAR (APP): Known as the best governance system in the world, democracy provides an inclusive mechanism for resolution of socioeconomic and political issues through evolving broad based political reconciliation among all the stakeholders vital for political harmony and sustainable economic growth. "Democracy is the best form of Govt, which are providing solutions to all problems. It is the best governance system being practiced in the world through which political, social and economic issues are addressed through reconciliation and dialogue among political stakeholders," Professor Dr AH Hilali, former Chairman of Political Science Department, University of Peshawar while talking to APP on Friday. In democratic setup, he said that all problems are being raised at Parliament, and addressed there instead of protesting in streets and roads. "In democratic process, the doors to political dialogue among religious and political entities are always open to take decisions in national interest and for people's wellbeing," he said. "Political dialogue removes misunderstanding among political players, and strengthens democracy besides ensuring smooth functions of state institutions, " he said. He said that a permanent political divide with no channel of communication, and intolerance in society retards the political and economic development besides widening business and economic gap between influential and underprivileged class. He said if the trend of political intolerance, accusations and blame games among politicians continued, then it would be extremely difficult to bring political and economic stability to the

country. Professor Hilali said unfortunately our politicians did not learn lessons from our grim political history and again started wrangling by closing the doors of political dialogue despite economic and security challenges. He said an absence of political dialogues among politicians in the past had led to derailment of democracy four times in Pakistan. He said that the government of Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was dismissed after the 9 religious and political parties under the platform of Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) had launched an agitation movement, claiming rigging in 1977 elections. In-spite of strong denial of the rigging allegations by PPP, he said PNA's agitation movement sparked riots and unrest, incurring colossal economic losses to the country and subsequently democracy was packed up for the third time on July 5, 1977. The absence of political dialogue had caused premature dissolution of the elected assemblies and the governments of former Prime Ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif twice each in 90s after they were accused of rigging in elections by opponents and its negative outcome came before us in the shape of martial law on October 12, 1999. Dr Hilali welcomed the recent informal political engagements between the Govt and opposition leaders and expressed the hope that all issues would be resolved under a democratic framework. He said that dialogue which started with preconditions has never become productive and expressed the hope that PTI leadership would withdraw its civil disobedience call before meaningful talks. He said the lack of trust apparently existed among

political stakeholders for launching constructive dialogue to address the existing challenges. He said that acceptance of political mandate was a guarantee for political stability and to take the ship of democracy to safe shores. Ikhtair Wali, PML-N KP spokesman and former member provincial assembly said that his party strongly believed in political dialogue. He claimed that we wanted dialogue with an open heart but PTI tries to hold it under a hanging of a sword. He said Charter of Democracy signed between former Prime Ministers, Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto was a great example of political reconciliation that later led to an adaptation of the landmark 18th constitutional amendment that returned all powers back to the parliament, granted provincial autonomy to the federating units, identity to people of KP after renaming NWFP as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and abolishment of the draconian 58 2 (B) article from the constitution. He said that PTI has now realized the importance of political dialogue after its Nov 26 agitation completely failed. He said that disobedience calls of PTI would face the same fate as of Nov 26 agitation. Ikhtair Wali said that PMLN did not believe in political victimization of opponents and law would take its own course in PTI founder case. However, he said that mocking national institutions and officials of national institutions as well as their family members were highly deplorable. Accusing PTI for creating political division in society and affecting the country's economy, he said that PTI continued accusations against the Govt was an attempt to get relief for its founder, who was jailed in corruption cases.

Despite political stubbornness and allegations of PTI founder, he said the coalition government had offered several times to PTI's former lawmakers to use parliament for talks but they made a mockery of the sincere offer of the PMLN leadership. He said the billion trees afforestation project was taken over by the NAB KP while BRT was completed on very high cost compared to Islamabad and Multan metros, thus wasting huge taxpayers money by PTI that also left the country's into the brink of economic collapse before PDM Govt took over. He said the non completion of Arbab Niaz Cricket Stadium was tantamount of depriving youth of sports. Ikhtair claimed that PTI had deceived people on the hollow slogan of accountability and change as the PTI former government in KP itself closed its own Ehtishab Commission at Peshawar besides the province was put under huge loans burden. The PMLN leader said that PTI has shattered the confidence of voters after prematurely dissolution of two provincial assemblies in the past after successful no confidence motion against PTI founder and had lost footings in KP after Nov 26 aimless agitation call. He said that personal attacks and dragging state institutions into politics by PTI would develop political polarisation in society besides creating hatred feelings among rival political forces. He said traffic jam in Peshawar City has made lives of Peshawarties miserable due to wrong planning in BRT's corridor and not a single hospital was completed in Peshawar by the PTI in its longest 10 years rule, exerting extra burden of patients in Lady Reading Hospital, Khyber Teaching Hospital and Hayatabad Medical Complex at Peshawar.

Ahsan Iqbal Suspends Funds for Merged Districts: Muzzammil

F.P. Report
PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Finance and Inter-Provincial Coordination Muzzammil Aslam, has expressed concerns over the suspension of funds for the merged districts (formerly FATA) by Chairman Planning Commission, Ahsan Iqbal. Mr. Aslam stated that

Ahsan Iqbal has retained his positions as Chairman and Deputy Chairman but has halted funds for the merged districts. Aslam criticized Ahsan Iqbal's actions, saying that he had done the same in 2022, which is unacceptable. He emphasized that the timely provision of developmental funds for the merged districts is the

right of the public of merged districts, and they will not make any humble requests for release of funds. The Advisor for Finance urged the Prime Minister and Finance Minister to take immediate notice of the suspension of funds for the merged districts. He also pointed out that the federal government has allocated a mini-

mal budget for the merged districts, which Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is fulfilling through its own resources. Mr. Aslam added that the province will not take responsibility for any shortcomings in achieving IMF targets, and that Punjab's poor performance should not be hidden by intentionally sabotaging Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's performance.



PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Syed Fakhar Jihan addressing Khyber Pakhtunkhwa contingent at an official sent off to participate in Quaid-e-Azam Inter-Provincial Games 2024

Muqam directs NADRA to facilitate people

PESHAWAR (APP): Federal Minister for States and Frontier Regions, Gilgit Baltistan and Kashmir Affairs, Engr Amir Muqam on Friday visited the new building of NADRA Regional Headquarters Peshawar where he was briefed about ongoing projects, services and facilities provided for facilitation of the people. Director General NADRA, Khalid Inayatullah Khan and other senior officials gave detailed briefing to the Federal Minister Engr Amir Muqam about the facilities, services, ongoing projects and infrastructure especially in the new building. The Federal Minister termed the civic facilities in the new NADRA building was an important step towards provision of modern infrastructure and facilities to the people besides further improving perform-

ance of NADRA to provide relief to the general public in the shortest possible time. The ongoing projects of NADRA, civic services and people problems came under discussion. The DG NADRA informed the Federal Minister Engr Amir Muqam about different ongoing projects and services and shed light on the overall performance of the Peshawar Region. Engr Amir Muqam while praising NADRA services has assured every possible support to NADRA for bringing further improvement in its services and speedy resolution of masses problems. On this occasion, Engr

Amir Muqam directed NADRA authorities to provide more facilities to people and complete the ongoing projects within stipulated time without compromising on quality and standards. The Federal Minister was presented with a shield by the Director General NADRA on this occasion.

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In brief

SACM reviews uplift projects F.P. Report

MARDAN: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Special Assistant for Technical and Vocational Education (TEVTA) Tufail Anjum and Deputy Commissioner Mardan presided over an important meeting on Friday. All district departments participated. In the meeting, the work on various development schemes of Mardan was reviewed in detail. On this occasion, the district officers gave a detailed briefing regarding their respective departments. Special Assistant to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tufail Anjum and Deputy Commissioner Mardan gave instructions to all district departments to provide public services in an efficient and transparent manner. He also briefed on various development schemes and directed the concerned departments not to compromise on the quality of work and transparency. It will be important and useful to improve. Meanwhile, the slaughterhouses of Mardan have become fully functional, in which animals are now slaughtered under the supervision of a live-stock doctor and the doctor puts his stamp on the meat.

Board meeting held F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: District Quality Control Board meeting was held under the chairmanship of Additional Deputy Commissioner General Toba Tek Singh Zeeshan Labbha Masih, on Friday. In which, CEO Health Dr. Kashif Mehmood Kamboh, Secretary District Quality Control Board Muhammad Irfan, Member Prof. Dr. Ijaz Bashir, Dr. Hassan Mehmood, Drug Inspectors Muhammad Zeeshan, Athar Farooq Watto, Arif Shahzad attended. 11 cases were presented in the meeting, 6 were given warning, 2 cases were postponed till next appearance, 3 cases were ordered to revisit the drug inspectors. Meanwhile, police continues to take steps to establish a strong relationship with the citizens. DPO Ibadat Nisar set up an open court in Jamia Masjid Ghala Mandi area of Police Station City Kamalia after Friday prayers to listen to the problems of the people and solve them. A large number of local people attended the open court. DPO Ibadat Nisar listened to the problems of Silen and issued instructions on the spot for their immediate resolution.

Five injured in gas explosion

QUETTA (PPI): At least five people, including women and children, were injured in a gas explosion caused by a leakage in the Killi Deba area of Quetta on Friday. According to initial reports, the explosion occurred due to accumulated gas in a residential unit. The blast left the injured with varying degrees of burns and injuries. Emergency responders and local residents quickly moved the victims to Sandeman Provincial Hospital Quetta, where they are receiving medical treatment. Hospital officials stated that some of the injured are in critical condition, and efforts are underway to stabilize them. Authorities have launched an investigation into the incident to determine the exact cause of the leakage and explosion. Such incidents are becoming increasingly frequent during the winter season as residents resort to alternative heating methods and gas appliances amid load shedding and pressure issues. Citizens are urged to exercise caution and ensure proper ventilation to prevent such accidents.

Second shift children OPD inaugurated in Dir hospital

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The district development advisory committee (DDAC)'s chairman MPA Ubaid ur Rehman along with assistant commissioner Zeeshan Najib on Friday inaugurated second shift children OPD at the THQ hospital Samarbagh. The hospital MS Dr Adil Khan and other staff were also present. Speaking on the occasion the DDAC chairman said the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government was working on various measures to improve service delivery at government hospitals. He said that specialist doctors, lady doctors and nurses had been transferred to the Samarbagh hospital. The lawmaker said the installation of biometric attendance had improved the staff presence. He said that patients of the area would now get free medical care and laboratory tests at the second shift children OPD. The residents lauded the lawmaker's efforts and expressed their pleasure in starting second shift OPD at the local hospital.

Sessions on Amazon

business models for students held: The district youth affairs Department in collaboration with the Department of Computer Sciences, Government Postgraduate College Timergara organized a two-day session on the topic of "Amazon Business Models." The Additional Deputy Commissioner Lower Dir Bashir Khan attended the function as the chief guest, while Mr Shafi Khan acted as resource person, who provided invaluable information on free-lancing and digital marketing.

Mazhar Shah Yousafzai shared his expertise on the dynamic world of e-commerce. He covered a number of topics including introduction to Amazon, how to start selling on the platform, different business models of Amazon, and sales plans. The ADC Bashir Khan said that similar Amazon and e-commerce sessions will be organized in every tehsil, which will promote capacity building in digital business among students.

He said that students should be diligent in their studies and actively partici-

pate in such seminars so that their information could be increased and they could compete with the outside world. He emphasized that these skills were very important for enhancing their employability and prospects for a successful future in the increasingly competitive job market.

Principal of the Postgraduate College Timergara Dr. Saeedullah Jan appreciated the efforts of the District Youth Officer and said that this initiative was commendable as it would provide new business opportunities and ideas to the students. More than 210 students participated in the discussion in the event. At the end of the event, District Youth Officer Malik Shahzad Tariq presented certificates of appreciation to the participants and organizers. Shields were also given to guests and other service providers. It is worth noting that this session not only provided valuable information but also encouraged the students to explore wider opportunities in the realm of digital marketing and e-commerce, paving the way for their future success.

Khatm-e-Nabuwwat (SAW) moot held at KUST

Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: The Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST) hosted its annual Khatm-e-Nabuwwat (SAW) conference, with Mufti Rizwan Aziz serving as the guest of honor. In his address, he emphasized the significance of the belief and urged attendees to follow the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to lead a virtuous life.

Speaking at the conference, KUST Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Muhammad Naseeruddin highlighted that the belief in the finality of Prophethood is a fundamental aspect of faith. He reaffirmed the unwavering commitment to this belief, stating that the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) serve as a guiding light for humanity, offering the path to success in this world and the hereafter.

The event concluded with the Vice Chancellor presenting honorary shields to the distinguished guests



and expressing appreciation to the organizers for ensuring the conference's success.

The conference was attended by Registrar Dr. Imran Ali, Dean of the Faculty of Management Sciences Dr. Dilawar Khan, Chairman of the Department of Islamic Studies Dr. Qaisar Bilal, as well as a large number of students and faculty members.

Meanwhile, the Department of Pharmacy at Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST) organized the "Antibiotic Awareness Program 2024" to educate

people on the proper use of antibiotics. Pharmacy students creatively presented awareness posters highlighting the correct usage of antibiotics and their potential side effects.

Speaking at the event, the Chief Guest, Vice Chancellor KUST, Professor Dr. Muhammad Naseeruddin, emphasized the importance of awareness regarding the safe use of medicines and their possible side effects for public health. He praised the efforts of the students, noting that such initiatives play a vital role in raising public health awareness.

JUI-F flays Secy Communication for blocking road projects

F.P. Report

TANK: Leader of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl (JUI-F) and former MPA Mahmood Ahmad Khan Bettani on Friday accused Federal Secretary Communication Ali Sher Mehsud of being the biggest obstacle to the development of Tank district.

In a media briefing, Mahmood Khan highlighted that according to the PSDP (Public Sector Development Programme), Tank-Pizo Road is entitled to an annual allocation of one billion rupees. He mentioned that although Rs500 million are usually released every quarter, no funds were allocated for the road this year.

JUI-F leader further

pointed out that despite the funds being due for release, the Secretary of Communication had removed Tank-Pizo Road and Yarak-Ranwal Road from the second-quarter list and sold these allocations to other districts for commission, thus delaying the progress of Tank's infrastructure once again.

Mahmood Khan claimed that Ali Sher Mehsud belongs to the same area, who is supposed to represent the interests of Tank, is instead acting against its development, taking on the role of an enemy rather than a supporter. The former MPA also recalled that former Federal Minister for Communications, Mufti Asad Mahmood, had

secured approval and initiated work on the Tank-Pizo and Ranwal-Yarak roads during his brief tenure. However, after leaving the government, Bettani accused Mehsud, the Secretary of Communication, of turning against these projects and becoming the primary hurdle in their completion.

Mahmood Khan has called the Prime Minister, Federal Minister for Finance, and other high-ranking officials to ensure the swift release of funds for these vital road projects. He demanded that Mehsud be held accountable for the frequent accidents on the Tank-Pizo Road and be removed from his post immediately.



LOWER DIR: Adviser to KP CM on Social Welfare, Malik Liaquat Khan visiting Timergara grid station.

Tourists sport Charh waterfall View point inaugurated F.P. Report

BUNER: Tehsil Nazim Gadezai Salarzai Sher Alam along with deputy commissioner Kashif Qayum Khan inaugurated the famous tourist spot "Charh Abshar", on Friday. A large number of village elders and youths participated on this occasion and expressed their happiness for the provision of facilities to the tourists in this hilly tourist destination.

On the occasion Deputy Commissioner Kashif Qayum Khan, Nazim Sher Alam Khan, TMO Anwar Shamim Khan told media that as per Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur Awami Agenda Program, the popular Charh Waterfall View Point has been built for the convenience of tourists visiting the famous scenic beautiful spot. They added, in order to make access to the tourist spots across the district easy for the public and provide facilities as well.

Sindh wouldn't accept Cholistan canal project F.P. Report

LARKANA: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has declared the project of 6 controversial canals including the Cholistan Canal as a robbery on the Indus River and a fight between the provinces. It has been announced that Sindh will fight the case of Sindh in all constitutional forums including ECNEC, NEC and CCI against the controversial canal project.

This was announced by Pakistan Peoples Party Sindh Provincial President Nisar Ahmed Khuhro while addressing a meeting held in Garhi Khuda Bakhsh Bhutto on the occasion of the 17th death anniversary of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto.

He further said that the construction of 6 canals on the Indus River is not acceptable in any case. He said that the decision to build 6 canals cannot be taken without the consent of the province. If approval is taken to build a canal against the consent of the province, the people of Sindh will be on the streets.

Admn holds stage drama 'Band Gali' on norcotics

F.P. Report

KOHAT: Fine Arts Organization Kohat has in collaboration with the District Administration Kohat presented a Stage Drama "Band Gali" on Thursday at Bacha Khan Library Kohat which was based on awareness of the growing trend of drug addiction among youth and its bad effects on the society.

It was written and directed by the PTV Senior Artist Naeem Iqbal Kohati and produced by PTV Senior Artist Prince Iqbal while PTV Senior Artist Nadeem Malik was the Co-Director and renowned Artist Liaquat Ali Khan was its Set Designer.

Senior PTI Leader and former Federal Interior Minister Shehryar Afridi

MNA was the Chief Guest on the occasion while Chairman DDAC Kohat Shafi Jan MPA and Deputy Commissioner Kohat Abdul Akram were the Guests of Honours.

The drama was watched by a large number of youths including Tehsil Nazim Gumbat Sajid Iqbal and Tehsil Nazim Lachi Ehsan Khan. The audience termed it a good effort of the District Administration Kohat.

The main idea of the Drama revolves around an unemployed youth from a poor family who becomes addicted to drugs due to the bad society. His entire family even the women of the house are humiliated in the society due to bad effects of the drugs addiction.

However, when he gets

rid of the curse of drugs and gained a place, the whole society accepts him and those who were not ready to any kind of relationship with him, adopt him. In the Drama "Band Gali" there was a big message for the youth to avoid bad company and say no to drugs. Shahrar Afridi MNA in his brief speech highly appreciated the main idea of the Drama and appreciated the efforts of the Deputy Commissioner Kohat Abdul Akram along with the Director of the Drama and its entire team for presenting a useful Play for the youth. He emphasized the need to present such Dramas in future also. At the end, Shields and Certificates were also given to the Actors of the Drama and others.

PML-N flays KP govt for discrimination in LG funds

F.P. Report

BUNER: Senior Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) leader Malik Syed Imran has raised voice against distribution of development funds on the basis of political affiliation to tehsil councils across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Malik Said Imran his social media statement has condemned depriving the elected chairmen of Tehsil Khadukhel and Tehsil Mandanr just because boot of them are affiliated other than PTI. He came hard on

KP government, terming it's attitude unfair towards opposition parties tehsel Chairmen. Malik Syed Imran has called the depriving of the development funds of the two tehsel Khadukhel and Mandar of constituency PK-27 Buner as an injustice to the people of the area and has questioned the silence of DDAC Chairman MPA PK 27 Abdul Kabir Khan.

Malik Syed Imran has warned the government that if the fair distribution of development funds is not ensured, the people will be

forced to protest and political parties will fully support the protesters. Malik Syed Imran has appealed to the elected members of the provincial assembly of the constituency PK 27 to intervene in this matter and emphasized to play a role in protecting the rights of the people of the area.

In his statement, Malik Syed Imran has taken a strong stand against the discrimination of the provincial government and emphasized the need to work beyond political affiliation for regional development.

Citizens of hold protest against gas, power outages

KUCHLAK (PPI): Hundreds of citizens in Kuchlak took to the streets on Friday to protest against the prolonged gas and electricity outages that have disrupted daily life in the town and surrounding areas of Quetta district.

The demonstration, organized under the banner of the Pushtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP), began with a rally that marched through various roads in Kuchlak before culminating on the Quetta-Chaman highway. Protesters, chanting slogans in support of their demands, staged a sit-in on the highway, drawing attention to the worsening energy crisis.

Speaking at the protest, PkMAP provincial secretary Kabeer Afghan and other leaders condemned the per-

sistent gas load shedding during the winter months, describing it as a grave injustice to the residents of Kuchlak and Quetta. They highlighted how the outages had made life unbearable, especially in the harsh winter conditions.

"Frequent incidents, including accidents and health issues caused by the unavailability of gas, have claimed the lives of citizens," one speaker remarked, urging the authorities to take immediate action.

The protesters also criticized the ongoing power outages, which they said had brought routine activities to a standstill. Residents face challenges in cooking, heating, and other essential tasks due to the dual crisis of gas

and electricity shortages.

The PkMAP leaders warned that if the government failed to address their grievances, they would escalate their protests. They called on the federal and provincial governments, as well as the relevant authorities, to ensure an uninterrupted supply of gas and electricity to the affected areas. Traffic on the Quetta-Chaman highway remained suspended for hours due to the demonstration, causing inconvenience to commuters. However, the protesters vowed to continue their struggle until their demands were met. The authorities were yet to issue a statement regarding the protest at the time of filing this report.

Story of Mazen Al-Hamada and Bashar regime

Kinza Sualiha

IN the heart of Syria's rebellion, where streets bore the weight of cries for freedom and skies echoed with the rumble of conflict, a lone voice emerged—a voice that would become both a beacon of hope and a testament to the regime's cruelty. Mazen Al-Hamada, a son of Deir Ezzor, was an ordinary man thrust into extraordinary circumstances.

His journey from a peaceful protester to a symbol of resilience and ultimately a victim of brutal oppression reveals the stark reality of Syria's suffering. His story, marked by unimaginable pain, relentless advocacy, and an untimely death, stands as a chilling reminder of the cost of speaking truth to power.

Mazen's life changed irrevocably in 2011, when peaceful protests swept through Syria, calling for justice, equality, and an end to the authoritarian rule of Bashar al-Assad. As a technician at Schlumberger, Mazen used his skills and access to document these historic uprisings, sharing footage and stories with the world. This act of defiance painted a target on his back. Arrested for the first time on March 24, 2011, Mazen's journey into the depths of Syria's brutal prison system began. Initial detentions were brief, but they foreshadowed the horrors to come.

In March 2012, Mazen was apprehended at a Damascus café, an ordinary moment shattered by the regime's relentless grip. Taken to the Air Force intelligence branch at al-Mezzeah Military Airport, he was later transferred to the notorious 601 Military Hospital. Here, the

facade of humanity crumbled. Mazen bore witness to scenes that defy comprehension: bodies discarded like refuse in bathroom stalls, detainees executed without cause, and the pervasive stench of death. For 15 harrowing months, Mazen endured unspeakable torture—beatings, sexual violence, and constant psychological torment—all designed to extract confessions to fabricated charges of terrorism. Yet, Mazen refused to break.

When he was released in September 2013, his body carried the scars of his captivity, but his spirit remained unbroken. Realizing the danger of staying in Syria, Mazen fled to Europe in 2014, seeking asylum in the Netherlands. Here, he transformed his personal pain into a force for change. Collaborating with NGOs and journalists, he worked tirelessly to expose the

Assad regime's atrocities. His testimony became a cornerstone of the documentary Syria's Disappeared: The Case Against Assad, shedding light on the regime's systematic use of torture and enforced disappearances. Mazen's voice resonated across international platforms, including the U.S. Congress, where he recounted his experiences with unwavering resolve. "I won't rest until [my torturers] are brought to justice," he declared, embodying the relentless pursuit of accountability.

Yet, even as he became a global advocate, Mazen struggled with the weight of his trauma. Haunted by memories of those left behind, he grappled with survivor's guilt and frustration at the world's seeming indifference. Friends and allies, including journalist Garance Le Caisne, who chronicled his story in Forget His Name: Mazen al-

Hamada, Memoirs of a Missing Man, noticed his growing despair. In February 2020, driven by a mix of hope and disillusionment, Mazen made the fateful decision to return to Syria. He believed his presence could make a difference, that perhaps he could bridge the divide between exile and those still suffering under the regime.

Upon landing in Damascus, Mazen disappeared. For years, his fate remained a mystery, a chilling echo of the countless Syrians who vanished into the regime's prisons. In December 2024, the worst fears of his friends and family were confirmed. His body was found in the Harasta Military Hospital morgue, alongside dozens of others bearing the unmistakable marks of torture. The NGO Syrian Revolution Archive identified his remains, bringing an end to years of agonizing uncer-

tainty. Mazen Al-Hamada's death sent shockwaves through the activist community. Tributes poured in from those who knew him and those inspired by his courage. Sarah Afshar, who worked closely with Mazen, reflected, "I want to remember Mazen the way he was, and to honour what he did." His life, marked by unyielding defiance and a deep commitment to justice, continues to inspire renewed calls for accountability and the preservation of Syria's memory.

Mazen's story is not just about one man's struggle; it is a mirror reflecting the pain and resilience of an entire nation. It reminds the world of the horrors faced by Syria's disappearance and the urgent need for justice. Even in death, Mazen Al-Hamada remains a symbol of resistance, his legacy etched into the fabric of a people's fight for freedom.



Syria's new govt says to suspend constitution

DAMASCUS (AFP): Syria's new government spokesman said the country's constitution and parliament would be suspended for the duration of the three-month transition period following president Bashar Assad's ouster. "A judicial and human rights committee will be established to examine the constitution and then introduce amendments," Obaida Arnaout said.

The current constitution dates back to 2012 and does not specify Islam as the state religion. Militants led by the Islamist militant group Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham seized the capital Damascus, sending Assad fleeing into exile. They named Mohammed Al-Bashir, who headed the militants' self-proclaimed "Salvation Government" in their northwestern bastion of Idlib, as the country's transitional prime minister until March 1.

Arnaout said a meeting would be held "between Salvation Government ministers and the former ministers" of Assad's administration to carry out the transfer of power. "This transitional period will last three months," he added in an interview with AFP. "Our priority is to preserve and protect institutions." Speaking at the state television headquarters, now seized by the new militant authorities, Arnaout pledged that they would institute "the rule of law."

"All those who committed crimes against the Syrian people will be judged in accordance with

the law," he added. Asked about religious and personal freedoms, he said "we respect religious and cultural diversity in Syria," adding that they would remain unchanged. The Sunni majority country was ruled with an iron fist by Assad, a follower of the Alawite offshoot of Shiite Islam who sought to project himself as a protector of minority communities.

Syria's new government thanked eight countries for swiftly reviving their diplomatic missions after a lightning militant offensive ousted president Bashar Assad at the weekend. The offensive, which took less than two weeks to sweep across Syria and take the capital Damascus, stunned the world and brought an end to more than a half a century of brutal rule by the Assad clan. The militants, led by the Islamist group Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS), appointed an interim prime minister to lead the country until March.

The new government's department of political affairs issued a statement thanking Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Bahrain, Oman and Italy "for resuming the activities of their diplomatic missions in Damascus." Italy had reopened its embassy in Damascus before Assad's fall.

After the militants took Damascus, an "armed group" entered the residence of Italy's ambassador in Damascus and stole three cars, the Italian government said. The new government

also said it had received "direct promises" from Qatar and Turkiye "to reopen their embassies in Syria" adding it hoped to "build good relations with all countries that respect the will of the people, the sovereignty of the Syrian state."

Many embassies had shut their doors as militants advanced toward Damascus. Gulf states had severed diplomatic ties with Syria, closing their embassies in the aftermath of Assad's brutal crackdown on pro-democracy protesters in 2011 that triggered the civil war. Most have restored relations since 2018, with the exception of Qatar.

Qatar announced it would "soon" reopen its embassy in Damascus, closed in 2011. The move aimed to "strengthen the close historical fraternal ties between the two countries," Qatar's foreign ministry said. The Gulf country also sought to "enhance coordination with relevant authorities to facilitate the flow of humanitarian aid currently provided by Qatar to the Syrian people" via an air bridge, it added. Doha had supported opposition factions early in the war and remained a fierce critic of Assad while also calling for a diplomatic solution. Turkiye has backed some Syrian militant groups since the start of the civil war. The war killed more than 500,000 people and forced half the population to flee their homes, with six million of them seeking refuge abroad.

Zelensky visits south Ukraine front line

KYIV (AFP): Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky visited troops fighting on the southern front line in the Zaporizhzhia region, he said in a post on Telegram. Zelensky said he had visited soldiers from the 27th Rocket Artillery Brigade, dubbed Ukraine's "HIMARS division" for its use of the US-supplied rockets.

"Thank you for your service and defense of our country and people. Let the HIMARS not fail, let them hit enemy targets," Zelensky said. In a video published on his Telegram channel, he was filmed addressing soldiers in a bunker and awarding some state awards. Russia has occupied part of the Zaporizhzhia region since the first days of its 2022 invasion, and claims to have annexed the full region.

The regional capital, also called Zaporizhzhia, has been pounded with Russian aerial strikes in recent weeks. Ukraine's interior ministry said earlier that 11 people had been killed in a missile strike, after rescue workers spent more than 46 hours sifting through rubble for bodies. Another 22 were wounded in the strike, including a girl aged five.

Meanwhile, Poland has no plans to send troops to Ukraine, Prime Minister Donald Tusk said, amid speculation that Western powers could put boots on the ground if a ceasefire is reached. Tusk was speaking alongside French President Emmanuel Macron who was visiting Warsaw. Diplomats said the idea of sending European troops to Ukraine if there is a ceasefire and peace accord between Ukraine and Russia would be on their agenda.

"To cut off speculation about the potential presence of this or that country in Ukraine after reaching a ceasefire... decisions concerning Poland will be made in Warsaw and only in Warsaw," Tusk said. "For now, we do not plan such actions." Macron said it was up to Ukraine to decide what concessions it wanted to make for peace, but for Europe to be secure the people of the continent as a whole must take responsibility. "(We have) the same desire to say to the Ukrainians that... nobody can discuss for the Ukrainians in their name the concessions to be made, the points to be raised, it is up to the Ukrainians to do it, but there is no security in Europe without the Europeans," Macron told a news conference.

European powers are keen to demonstrate to Donald Trump, who will be inaugurated as US president on Jan. 20, that they are willing to assume their share of the burden to end the almost three-year war in Ukraine. Finance and foreign ministers from France, Germany and Poland are also meeting in Warsaw and in Berlin, just weeks before Poland takes over the rotating EU presidency from Hungary.



DAMASCUS: Displaced women who fled the Aleppo countryside, sit with their children in Tabqa, Syria.

Yoon vows to 'fight to the end', defying impeachment threat

SEOUL (Reuters): South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol said he would "fight to the end" as his own political party shifted closer to voting with the opposition to impeach him over his short-lived martial law order that threw the US ally into turmoil. In a lengthy televised address, he alleged that North Korea had hacked South Korea's election commission, casting doubt on his party's landslide election defeat in April.

Yoon, whose country has Asia's fourth-largest economy, hopes political allies will rally to support him but this appeared less likely after his address. The leader of his ruling People Power Party (PPP) said the time had come for Yoon to resign or be impeached by parliament. Late, six opposition parties led by the Democratic Party submitted a bill for Yoon's impeachment to parliament. A vote is expected, a week after the first one failed because most PPP members boycotted it.

At least seven members of the party were expected to support the new impeachment motion. At least eight PPP votes are needed for the two-thirds majority required to impeach Yoon. Yoon said the opposition was "dancing the sword dance of madness" by trying to drag a

democratically elected president from power, nine days after his aborted attempt to grant sweeping powers to the military. "I will fight to the end," he said. "Whether they impeach me or investigate me, I will face it all squarely."

His defiance raised the possibility that Yoon, a career prosecutor and a legal expert, may have decided to take his chances to court, hoping to make a comeback. A vote to impeach Yoon would send the case to the Constitutional Court, which has up to six months to decide whether to remove him from office or reinstate him. Yoon is separately under criminal investigation for alleged insurrection over the Dec. 3 martial law declaration, which he rescinded hours later, triggering South Korea's biggest political crisis in decades and sending economic and diplomatic shockwaves.

The US Forces Korea said on X Commander Paul LaCamera had spoken to South Korea's acting defence minister to reassure Seoul over USFK's readiness to respond to external threats while respecting South Korea's sovereignty. About 28,500 US troops are stationed in South Korea. Yoon said "criminal groups" had paralysed state affairs

and disrupted the rule of law and must be stopped at all costs from taking over government.

He was criticising the opposition Democratic Party which has blocked some of his proposals and demanded his wife be investigated over alleged wrongdoing. He gave no evidence of criminal activity. Kim Min-seok, a senior Democratic Party member, said Yoon's address was a "display of extreme delusion" and urged members of the president's party to join the impeachment vote. Yoon alleged communist-ruled North Korea had hacked into the National Election Commission (NEC) last year, but cited no evidence.

He said the attack was detected by the National Intelligence Service but the commission, an independent agency, refused to cooperate fully in an investigation and inspection of its system. The hack cast doubt on the integrity of the April 2024 election - which his party lost by a landslide - and led him to declare martial law, he said. The commission said by raising the suspicion of election irregularities, Yoon was committing a "self-defeating act against an election oversight system that elected himself as president."

Dozens of UAE flights head to airstrip UN says supplies arms to Sudan rebels

LONDON (Reuters): Since civil war erupted in Sudan last year, dozens of cargo planes from the United Arab Emirates have landed at a small airstrip in Chad that some UN experts and diplomats suspect is being used to funnel arms across the border into the conflict, flight data and satellite images show.

At least 867 flights from the UAE have headed for an airstrip at Amdjarass in eastern Chad since the war began in April 2023, three-quarters of them operated by carriers accused by the UN of ferrying Emirati weapons to a warlord in Libya, according to the flight data and corporate documents reviewed by Reuters. The UAE, a key Western ally in the Middle East, says it has been sending aid for Sudan via Chad, not arms.

The country rejected a report by a UN panel of experts in January that cited "credible" allegations the UAE was providing military supplies via the Chad airstrip to Sudan's Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a paramilitary group fighting the Sudanese army in a conflict that has killed tens of thousands of people and driven millions from their homes. Previously unreported video footage reviewed by Reuters from Amdjarass filmed this year, showing two pallets on the tarmac stacked with khaki crates, some of them? labelled with the UAE flag. Reuters is withholding the exact date and origin of the footage due to the risk of reprisals. Three weapons experts, two of whom have worked as UN investigators, said the crates appeared unlikely to be carrying humanitarian aid, which is often packaged in cardboard boxes wrapped in plastic and stacked high on pallets due to its light weight. The crates in the video appear to be metal and are stacked low on the pallets. The contents were "highly probably ammunition or weapons, based on the design and colour of boxes," according to one of the experts, who has worked as a UN weapons inspector and asked not to be identified because of the sensitivity of the information. The long and thin portions of cases on the right-hand pallet indicate they likely contain weapons, he added.

Reuters was unable to verify independently the crates' contents. It is withholding the exact date of filming to protect the source. In a statement sent

to Reuters, the UAE government said it had sent 159 relief flights with more than 10,000 tonnes of food and medical aid, partly to supply a field hospital it has established in Amdjarass. "We firmly reject the baseless and unfounded claims regarding the provision of arms and military equipment to any warring party since the beginning of the conflict," the statement said.

Since the Arab Spring uprisings of 2011, the oil-rich Gulf state has intervened in conflicts from Yemen to Libya, partly in an effort to roll back Islamist groups.? The UAE sees such groups, including the Muslim Brotherhood, as a threat to domestic stability. Islamists associated with the rule of ousted Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir have long held influence within Sudan's army.

Demoralised and abandoned by allies: Why Assad's army failed to fight in Syria

DAMASCUS/AMMAN/BAGHDAD (Reuters): Twenty-three-year-old Syrian military conscript Farhan al-Khouli was badly paid and demoralized. His army outpost in scrubland near the rebel-held city of Idlib should have had nine soldiers but it just had three, after some had bribed the commanding officers to escape serving, he said.

And, of the two conscripts with him, one was regarded by his superiors as mentally unfit and not trusted with a gun, Khouli said. For years, the Islamist rebels of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) had sat behind the near-by frontline, with Syria's long civil war frozen. But, Nov. 27, Khouli's commanding officer - at another post behind the frontlines - called his mobile phone to tell him a rebel convoy was heading his way.

The officer said the unit should stand its ground and fight. Instead, Khouli put his phone on airplane mode, changed into civilian clothes, dropped his rifle and fled. As he walked along the road back south, other groups of soldiers were abandoning their posts too.

"I looked back and saw everyone walking behind me. When they saw one person flee, everyone started to toss their weapons and run," he told Reuters this week in Damascus, where he has found work at a horse stable. In a little less than two weeks, the rebels would sweep into the capital Damascus, toppling former president Bashar al-Assad as his army simply melted away. The rout abruptly ended a 13-year conflict that had killed hundreds of thousands of people. Reuters spoke to a dozen sources including two Syrian army deserters,

three senior Syrian officers, two Iraqi militia commanders working with the Syrian army, a Syrian security source and a source familiar with the thinking of Lebanese group Hezbollah, one of Assad's main military allies.

The sources, along with intelligence documents Reuters found in an abandoned military office in the capital, painted a detailed picture of how Assad's once-feared army had been hollowed out by the demoralization of troops, heavy reliance on foreign allies particularly for the command structure, and growing anger across the ranks at rampant corruption. Most of the sources asked not to be named because they were not authorised to talk to media or feared retribution. Since the war began in 2011, Assad's army command had come to depend on allied Iranian and Iran-funded Lebanese and Iraqi forces to provide the best fighting units in Syria, all the senior sources said.

Crucially, much of the Syrian military's operational command structure was run by Iranian military advisors and their militia allies, they said. But many of the Iranian military advisers had left this spring after Israeli strikes on Damascus, and the rest departed last week, said the Iraqi militia commanders, who worked alongside them. Hezbollah fighters and commanders had already mostly left in October to focus on the escalating war in Lebanon with Israel, the source familiar with Hezbollah thinking said.

The Syrian army's own central command and control centre no longer functioned well after the Iranian and Hezbollah officers left and the military lacked a defence

strategy, particularly for Syria's second city of Aleppo, a Syrian colonel, two Syrian security sources and a Lebanese security source familiar with the Syrian military said. By contrast, rebels in the northwest, on paper numerically far weaker than the army, had spent years consolidating under a single operations room that coordinated their groups and units in battle, an International Crisis Group report said after the fall of Aleppo. Reuters was unable to contact a current representative of the armed forces. Syria's new most powerful figure, HTS chief Ahmad al-Sharaa told Reuters he would dissolve Syria's security forces. Iran's mission to the United Nations, the Iraqi militias and Hezbollah did not respond to requests for comment.

As Aleppo came under attack in late November, army units were not given a clear plan but were told to work it out for themselves or to fall back to the strategic city of Homs to try to regroup, two Syrian security sources said. Aleppo fell without a major fight on Nov. 29, just two days after the offensive began, sending shockwaves through the military, three senior Syrian officers said. What was left on the ground was a Syrian army severely lacking in cohesion, all the sources said, describing multiple units that were undermined because officers were accepting bribes to let soldiers off duty, or had told soldiers to go home and were collecting their salaries themselves.

In 2020, the army had 130,000 personnel, according to think tank IISS' Military Balance report, describing it as significantly depleted by the long civil war and transformed into an

irregularly structured, militia-style organisation focused on internal security. In the days ahead of the regime's collapse, the United States had information of broad levels of desertions and military forces changing sides, as well as some elements fleeing to Iraq, a US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said. Reuters could not establish the overall manpower shortage in the military or current force strength.

The Syrian army sources described officers and troops alike as demoralised by pay that was consistently low even after painful military victories earlier in the war and by reports, which Reuters could not verify, that Assad's close family were growing immensely rich. On Nov. 28, the General Command of the Army and Armed Forces issued a telegram, ordering all troops to be on full combat readiness, according to a military document found by Reuters at an Air Intelligence office in Damascus. In a sign the regime was desperate, Syria's Air Intelligence Directorate, a key agency close to the Assad family, accused its men of "laxity" at checkpoints throughout the country after one was overrun by rebels in the south on Dec. 1, and warned of punishment "without leniency" if they did not fight, the document seen by Reuters shows. Despite the orders and threats, increasing numbers of soldiers and officers began to desert, all the sources said.

Instead of confronting the rebels, or even unarmed protesters, soldiers were seen by residents of Syrian cities, and in many videos that began circulating online, abandoning their posts, changing into civilian clothes

and going home. Reuters journalists entering Syria found army uniforms still strewn across Damascus streets. The corruption and poor morale went up through the ranks. Many midrank and military officers had been growing increasingly angry in recent years that the army's sacrifices and successes during the war were not reflected in better pay, conditions and resources, two serving, one recently retired and one defected officer said.

In 2020, Russia and Turkey agreed a deal that froze the frontlines after Assad retook all major cities and the main highway linking Damascus to Aleppo, further partitioning a country also split by Kurdish-controlled areas. But Syria's economy continued to reel from US sanctions and reduced foreign aid, said Arun Lund, a fellow at Middle East-focused think tank Century International. Rampant inflation ensued. "Things just got worse for everyone, except for the oligarchs and elites around Assad. That seems to have been incredibly demoralizing," Lund said.

While decrees in 2021 roughly doubled military salaries to keep up with inflation that topped 100% that year, buying power rapidly fell anyway as the Syrian pound crunched against the dollar. Col. Makhlof Makhlof, who served in an engineering brigade, said that if anybody complained about corruption they were called in for questioning at a military court - something that had happened to him more than once.

"We were living in a scary society. We were afraid to say a word," Makhlof said. He had been stationed in Hama but deserted before the city

fell to the rebels on Dec. 5, he said in an interview in Aleppo. Anger had been building particularly over the past year or so, a serving senior military intelligence officer said, saying there was "growing resentment against Assad," including among core high-ranking supporters from his Alawite minority community.

Khouli's military experience illustrated the army's problems - and helps explain his lack of loyalty. He was drafted for the obligatory 18-month service at age 19, after having paid-off an officer to delay his service for a year. When his service period expired, he was ordered to remain in the army indefinitely. He deserted but was later picked up by a patrol, put in prison for 52 days and then sent to the remote outpost near Idlib. He was paid 500,000 Syrian pounds (\$40) a month. Army rations were often pilaged before arriving. Sometimes his entire pay went on buying more food, he said.

Comrades with money would pay officers \$100, which he lacked, to get out of service, Khouli said. Khouli's brigade was supposed to have 80 soldiers, but in fact there were only 60, he said. He described bad treatment from officers, including being assigned heavy manual labour digging earth berms in both very hot and very cold weather and during nights. Reuters was not able to verify independently the details of his experiences. One former major described the use of forced conscripts as a "fatal mistake". A former army logistics serviceman, Zuhair, 28, said in an interview in Damascus he had seen officers steal and sell electricity generators and fuel.

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Abu Dhabi's meet on mangroves shows the way

DESCRIBING mangroves as “nature’s fortress” and “our unsung heroes”, which serve as carbon sinks, protectors of coastlines and havens of biodiversity, Dr. Shaikhha Salem Al Dhaheri, Secretary General of Environmental Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD), said in her opening remarks at the first edition of The International Mangrove Conservation and Restoration Conference (IMCRC) in Abu Dhabi on Tuesday, “Here in Abu Dhabi, we have long recognised the importance of protecting and restoring our biodiversity. Our mapping study revealed that mangroves cover in Abu Dhabi Emirate has increased from over 9,100 hectares in 1987 to 17,600 hectares in 2020.”

The conference is part of the second Year of Sustainability under the framework of the Abu Dhabi Mangrove Initiative and Abu Dhabi's Climate Change Strategy. She paid tribute to UAE's founding father, Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan: “This conference is a tribute to Sheikh Zayed's legacy and his vision of inclusivity – a vision that focused not only on nation-building but also on nature-building.” She emphasised: “By nurturing our ecosystems and healing our planet, we can leave our own legacies for future generations.”

She said that 50 per cent of the mangrove systems in the world are at risk due to human activity, and pointed to the importance of the conference in meeting this challenge: “This conference provides an ideal platform to tackle these challenges through international collaboration.”

It has been the consistent stance of the UAE that the issues of climate change have to be tackled at the global level and through international cooperation, and climate change impacts the whole planet and all the people on it.

The approach is also guided by the fact that the solutions to the climate change challenge have to be based on scientific evidence and science-based solutions. There has been a tendency on the part of some of the groups protesting climate change and the slow response of governments, especially of the developed countries, to seek drastic and unrealistic timeframes for solutions. The UAE's approach shows that the policies have to be evolved through global consultation of experts, and implementation strategies should be worked out.

And also, there are no instant solutions to the climate problems. The example of the expansion of the Abu Dhabi mangrove belt from 1987 to 2020 cited above is an example that there is need for patience and persistence to make things work. Also, no country can work out solutions on its own. It needs help from experts all over, and there is need to share knowledge.

The Abu Dhabi Mangrove Initiative that started in 2022 is not meant just for Abu Dhabi but for mangroves everywhere, and it has established Abu Dhabi as a global hub for the conservation and restoration of mangroves. A session on “Achieving High-Integrity Mangrove Restoration for Nature, Climate and People” on the opening day of the conference indicated the intent and scope of the conference. It shows that similar initiatives have to be taken in different countries, which are global in nature, so that the cumulative efforts of governments, peoples, and groups of international experts can work to find the answers to the big challenges facing the world on the climate front.

The UAE's willingness to work with international teams of experts sets a good example for other governments.

Another important aspect of the UAE's approach to climate change is its openness to innovative technologies for tackling climate challenges. It shows that there is no turning our back on technology, but that it should be pressed into service to solve problems confronting humanity. Grand announcements and grand gestures are not of much use. The Abu Dhabi conference shows how the work needs to be carried out at the ground level.

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Is HTS really 'Syria's Taliban'?

Sulaiman Hakemy

THE parallels between recent events in Syria and those that transpired in August, 2021, in Afghanistan draw themselves. An Islamist insurgency listed by many countries as a terrorist group, which has controlled a portion of its home country for years, overthrows the national government in a sudden blitzkrieg – surreal, even to those leading the charge. Photographs circulate on social media showing men with guns and austere expressions posing in state rooms left vacant by senior officials from the ancient regime, who left in a hurry. The world watches on, wondering what the handover of ministries, state television, arsenals and electricity grids to the militants will mean.

It has only happened this way these two times, and so the sense of fraternity between the Taliban in Afghanistan and Hayat Tahrir Al Sham (HTS) in Syria is understandable. The first country to congratulate the Syrian people for the fall of Bashar Al Assad on December 8 was Afghanistan.

Actually, the statement issued by the Taliban's foreign ministry first congratulated HTS, and then the people of Syria – as if to breathe life into the questions many asked when the Al Assad government fell: is HTS Syria's Taliban? Is this Afghanistan all over again? As Graeme Smith, a senior analyst at International Crisis Group, has written: “There is no playbook for Islamist insurgents faced with the challenges of running a country. But there is a precedent, in Afghanistan.”

It must be said upfront that, despite the parallels, the circumstances are very different. That's why other parts of these two stories feel

very different. For days after the Taliban entered Kabul, the streets were deserted, except for the airport, where tens of thousands of terrified Afghans had gathered trying to force their way onto evacuation flights. In Damascus, Syrians have packed the streets in celebration.

Is that because most Syrians aspire to an Islamist theocracy, and most Afghans did not? Not at all. Afghanistan is a far more religiously conservative country. By contrast, secularism runs deep in much of Syria, including in most big cities.

The explanation for the different reactions is straightforward: while most Afghans and Syrians dislike their previous governments, the hatred for Bashar Al Assad among Syrians is many, many orders of magnitude greater than that of Afghans for Ashraf Ghani, the deposed leader of Afghanistan's republic – and justifiably so.

There is also a narrative that has taken shape – rather quickly – that HTS is chastened by Syria's immense religious and political diversity, and that its leader, Ahmad Al Shara, formerly known as Abu Mohammed Al Jawlani, understands that his organisation cannot remake the country in its image. Over the past several years that HTS ruled the Syrian province of Idlib, it oversaw the reopening of a church, cracked down on terrorist groups with ambitions for global jihad and allowed girls to attend school.

When the militants advanced from Hama to Homs, they left the majority-Isma'ili city of Salamiyah untouched, purportedly to show respect to that religious minority community. When they entered Aleppo, they reassured the local

priests that they do not intend to persecute Christians. The poetry in all this happening on the road to Damascus has been irresistible to some commentators. Headlines in western media are using the words “pragmatism”, “tolerance” and “pluralism” after Al Jawlani's name.

It is too early to say whether this knee-jerk rehabilitation of HTS is merited. But as someone who reported on the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan and has visited

Taliban-ruled Afghanistan many times since, I cannot help but find it remarkable. That is because the Taliban had a similar stump speech on its campaign trail: Taliban 2.0 respects Afghanistan's minorities, rejects global jihad and even accepts girls' education “in line with Islamic principles”. Some US diplomats pushed that line, too, hoping it would make America's withdrawal from Afghanistan more palatable. Yet at the time, few outside of Afghanistan, and even inside Afghanistan, seemed to believe them.

The cynical – and I think partially true – explanation is that this was because the Taliban were fighting western forces, and not one of the world's most reviled dictatorships. Of course, if you speak to Taliban fighters and Afghans sympathetic to them, you will hear many vivid and real stories of disappearances, torture, night raids, drone attacks and secret prisons run by the Afghan republic and its western backers. A photo of a rust-covered corridor in the now-liberated Sednaya Prison in Damascus looks eerily similar to one of the notorious Bagram Prison near Kabul.

The past three years of Taliban administration show it is not easy for an Islamist

insurgency to keep all of its campaign promises. There are elements within the Taliban who want to see girls in school, but more powerful elements clearly find the idea too difficult to stomach. The Taliban has not, as a matter of policy, persecuted any religious minorities – it makes a serious effort to protect them from groups like ISIS – but nor has it embraced them as equal stakeholders in government. After all, there must be at least some of Taliban 1.0 in Taliban 2.0 if it is still to be the Taliban.

The HTS that took Damascus over the weekend is version 4.0, which says it wants an inclusive, unity government in Syria. But the beta version, it is worth remembering, grew out of a group that eventually became ISIS; Mr Al Shara got his start as a lieutenant of ISIS leader Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi. HTS 2.0 was subordinate to Al Qaeda, and HTS 3.0 rose to become Idlib's supreme Islamist faction. Are three iterations of evolution enough to reassure Syrians that HTS has completely transcended its roots?

Life in Idlib under HTS can provide some insight. Throughout its rule, and even after its “rebrand”, HTS closed down entertainment venues, imposed strict rules governing social life and occasionally executed people convicted of apostasy. One person who worked in the province's school system tells me HTS authorities had preferred to bar teenage girls from the classroom, but relented after western donor countries threatened to withhold teacher salaries if they did. Already, there is evidence that in the past few days HTS or associated groups have carried out executions, and some militants have not adhered to instructions to leave people and buildings in peace.

Why ‘Asian NATO’ finds no support?

Vox South

WITH the geopolitical landscape shifting in recent years, some are trumpeting NATO's eastward expansion into Asia, an attempt to mimic the “collective security” concept of the West. Certain countries are even peddling the idea of an “Asian NATO”. Much to their surprise, however, such a notion has been met with a chorus of resistance. “We are already ASEAN. We do not need NATO in ASEAN,” said the Malaysian Foreign Minister Mohamad Hasan. The Jakarta Post, a leading English newspaper in Indonesia, has dismissed the idea of “Asian NATO” in an editorial, “advising” certain countries to refrain from promoting this idea to avoid self-humiliation. Even the Philippines, which is the most aggressive on the South China Sea issue, considers “Asian NATO” unrealistic. S. Jaishankar, India's External Affairs Minister, said “We don't have that kind of strategic architecture in mind.” He went on to say that India “has a different history and a different way of approaching the world”. Moreover, Asian countries have expressed deep concern over the concept itself. They believe that it does no good to Asia's peace and security, and have questioned the ulterior motives behind it.

There are several reasons for Asian countries' concerns about the idea of an “Asian NATO”. First and foremost, they are wary

of the historical and geopolitical baggage associated with the term “NATO”. As is widely known, NATO was born out of the Cold War, representing the harsh history of all-out East-West confrontation. Back then, most of the Asian countries, already grappling with internal and external threats, were entangled in great power rivalries. It was precisely after the end of the Cold War that Asian countries stepped out of the shadow of the bipolar world to embrace a peaceful and stable external environment, brimming with dynamism for self-reliance and self-improvement. Since then, regional cooperation has started to flourish, with ASEAN as a shining example.

Besides, China has created an economic miracle following its reform and opening-up in 1978. Countries such as India have also experienced rapid development.

These have made Asia an indispensable part of the world economy and the most promising region. That is why Asian countries cherish the hard-won peace and the momentum for cooperation and development. No one wishes to return to bloc confrontation.

While NATO focuses on security cooperation, what Asian countries and the Global South prioritize is development cooperation. Hying up so-called “common threats”, building barriers and triggering conflicts between partners is tantamount to rejecting progress and opportunity.

Such practice not only goes against the trend of the times but also the will of the people. Moreover, NATO's enthusiasm for creating exclusive circles runs counter to Asian countries' desire for open cooperation. ASEAN, which is growing steadily, has established cooperation mechanisms with China, Japan and South Korea separately (10+1), and with the three countries as a whole (10+3).

These mechanisms have continuously deepened, with a series of other Asian cooperation mechanisms also advancing. These align with the aspirations of most Asian countries and have brought tangible benefits to peoples across the continent. Just days after a certain country suggested the idea of an “Asian NATO”, leaders from China and ASEAN countries announced the substantive conclusion of negotiations to upgrade the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area (FTA) to Version 3.0. The China-ASEAN FTA, since its initiation in 2000, has grown from strength to strength as the world's largest trade bloc among developing countries encompassing a population of 1.9 billion across 11 countries.

This reflects the shared commitment of ASEAN and China to spearhead East Asia's economic integration, and provide strong impetus for Asia's continued development. Undeniably, the security landscape in Asia has undergone significant changes in recent years,

necessitating the improvement of the existing security architecture and the exploration of new security ideas. But Asia is not Europe or North America. The diverse national conditions and cultures of Asian countries have shaped an inclusive rather than exclusive approach to security. Eastern civilizations, characterized by a great emphasis on harmony and common prosperity, have nurtured traditional values of fostering friendly relations with neighbors. The belief in mutual trust and peaceful coexistence as the cornerstone of true security is deeply ingrained in the region. Universal security and common security are true security. A beggar-thy-neighbor approach not only fails to address one's own security concerns, but also leaves everyone else feeling insecure.

The ways in which Asian countries resolve disputes also differ from the West's frequent use of force. The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, first proposed in Asia 70 years ago, have gained widespread recognition among Global South countries.

A recent example of this is an agreement reached by China and India, two ancient civilizations, through patient dialogue and consultation, to ease tensions in border areas, once again demonstrating the unique wisdom of Asian cultures in addressing security issues. From the perspective of the Global South, this approach evidently outshines Western mentality and the NATO model.

Review of the national space policy of Pakistan

Areesha Manzoor

TECHNOLOGY has revolutionised contemporary life and sparked human aspirations to explore space. The National Space Policy of Pakistan (NSPP)- 2024 sets space exploration goals to propel Pakistan towards prosperity. This Insight examines the NSPP-2024 and presents its elemental analysis.

Pakistan's space programme has a rich legacy, developed under the supervision of the Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) in the early 1960s. Pakistan stepped

into space with its first rocket, Rehbar-1, with the help of the United States Space Agency in 1962. Over the decades, SUPARCO has progressed and launched indigenously built satellites, including remote sensing and communication satellites. This rich history of achievements is a source of pride and inspiration for the nation. After more than half a century spent in space navigation, the NSPP was launched in January 2024, setting forth guidelines for space exploration to enhance national security and prosperity. The NSPP-2024 is a watershed event that will unfold new avenues of progress in space orbits for Pakistan.

The NSPP comprises six segments: introduction, objectives, principles, thrust areas, comprehensive guidelines, implementation, and monitoring. This comprehensive structure ensures that all aspects of space policy and technology are considered and addressed, instilling a sense of reassurance and confidence in its effectiveness. The policy envisions improving the 'quality of life of people of Pakistan while safeguarding national interest and sovereignty' and provides detailed guidelines to achieve these objectives.

The policy provides directions for future space endeavours and aims to achieve socioeconomic development and enhance national security through space technologies. It is a beacon of hope, as it shows that Pakistan can achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the objectives of its National Vision 2025. This strategic plan aims to improve citizens' living standards through robust space programmes. This policy emphasises self-reliance in the technology sector while strengthening international cooperation, aligning with the nation's strategic vision.

The NSPP's eight thrust areas reflect its key objectives. These objectives include space technology applications, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) education, infrastructure and local industry, space education and awareness, international collaboration, sustainable use of space, and formulation of space laws and regulations. This thorough plan ensures that all aspects of space policy and technology are considered and addressed.

The NSPP also provides comprehensive guidelines to achieve these objectives. One pivotal prerequisite for advancing space exploration is acquiring a robust mechanism for formulating national space policies and laws. NSPP closed this legislative gap in the space sector by declaring SUPARCO the National Space Agency of Pakistan. With its expertise and resources, SUPARCO, in coordination with relevant federal and provincial ministries, is in charge of carrying out all space-related activities and is also responsible for implementing, monitoring, and reviewing space policy.

Another important aspect of NSPP is its suggestion to form public-private partnerships to fund the research and development sector. The government can accomplish this by providing incentives to private partners. The policy underscores the role of space technologies in addressing current governance issues such as cyber challenges, urban development, climate change, and disaster mitigation.

The policy also guides using space as a diplomatic tool to achieve foreign policy objectives and

strengthen international relations. Regional and international space collaborations have been sought to facilitate investment and technology transfers. These collaborations could involve joint space missions, technology sharing agreements, or participation in international space organizations. Pakistan shall continue advocating for international laws for the sustainable and peaceful use of space, demonstrating its commitment to global cooperation and the prevention of space weaponisation.

The NSPP aims to revitalise Pakistan's long-standing efforts to use space peacefully through political commitment and dynamic international relations. The strategic plan promises to add immense value to the country's ongoing space programme. Pakistan's use of its space programme for peaceful purposes and socioeconomic development is a testament to the potential benefits of the NSPP 2024.

Pakistan prioritises international cooperation in space and is also part of regional and international space agencies. It is evident from Pakistan's close collaboration with major spacefaring nations like the US, China, and Russia. Pakistan and the US cooperated in the early decades of SUPARCO, while China emerged as a pivotal space partner in the 21st century. Pakistan also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Russia on space cooperation that can be revived now. Thus, Pakistan's global outlook on space cooperation can be advanced in light of the NSPP.

Furthermore, NSPP reflects Pakistan's determined pursuit of space resources. Significant milestones have been achieved in this regard. These include the launch of its first deep space mission, ICUBE-QAMAR, on 3 May 2024 in collaboration with China under the Asia-Pacific Space Cooperation Organization (APSCO) Framework. Additionally, Pakistan has launched PakSAT-MM1, a communication satellite intended to promote socioeconomic development and digitalisation within the country. Pakistan aims to launch five GEO satellites and six Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellites, as outlined in its Space Vision 2047. The success of this Vision will play a crucial role in determining the success of NSPP.

SUPARCO is also establishing PSARB to prevent unauthorised satellite launches and assist in their registration. Ecosystems within universities are planned to foster academia-professional connections, promote Indigenous development, and public outreach through partnerships with private partners.

Although NSPP has paved the way for Pakistan's space programme's success, consistent budgetary allocations will ensure its continuity and success. Moreover, the next step will be planning and operationalising its objectives through quantifiable measures. The process will take time since it is a debut policy launched only a few months ago.

NSPP aligns with Pakistan's ongoing space programme. All ongoing projects have been gathered under its umbrella. It is a crucial step towards establishing guidelines for utilising advanced space technologies for national development and security. It also complies with international obligations for the peaceful uses of space technologies, showcasing Pakistan's commitment to global peace and cooperation and creating a legal framework for sustainable space usage. Advanced space technologies can help Pakistan tackle various governance-related challenges, including resource and risk management and urban planning. Achieving the objectives and implementing the NSPP will require international cooperation, public-private partnerships, and steadfast political commitment.

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Xi’s RSVP is a snub to Trump, but the inauguration invite is still a big deal

IMAGINE the scene, at noon on January 20, on the west front of the US Capitol.

As Donald Trump swears to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution on the same spot where his supporters rioted four years ago, an extraordinary VIP guest looks on, overshadowing ex-presidents, military brass and members of Congress.

Bundled up to ward off the winter chill is Xi Jinping, the hardline leader of China — the country almost everyone on the inaugural platform sees as an existential threat to US superpower dominance as a 21st century cold war accelerates.

It’s a fantastical picture, because even before sources on Thursday confirmed Xi wouldn’t attend, it was obvious it could not happen, despite Trump’s stunning invitation to the leader of the Chinese Communist Party for a second inauguration he hopes to turn into a striking global statement.

Getting Xi to fly across the world would be an enormous coup for the president-elect — a fact that would make it politically unfeasible for the Chinese leader. Such a visit would put the Chinese president in the position of paying homage to Trump and American might — which would conflict with his vision for China’s assumption of a rightful role as a preeminent global power. At the inaugural ceremony, Xi would be forced to sit and listen to Trump without having any control over what the new president might say while lacking a right of reply. Xi’s presence would also be seen as endorsing a democratic transfer of power — anathema for an autocrat in a one-party state obsessed with crushing individual expression.

Still, even without a favorable response, Trump’s invitation to Xi marks a significant development that sheds light on the president-elect’s confidence and ambition as he wields power ahead of his second term. CNN’s team covering Trump reported that he’s also been asking other world leaders if they want to come to the inauguration — in a break with convention.

This is a reminder of Trump’s fondness for foreign policy by grand gesture and his willingness to trample diplomatic codes with his unpredictable approach. The Xi invitation also shows that Trump believes that the force of his personality alone can be

a decisive factor in forging diplomatic breakthroughs. He’s far from the only president to pursue this approach — which rarely works since hostile US adversaries make hard-nosed choices on national interest rather than vibes.

The president-elect’s invitation to Xi is all the more interesting because he’s spent the last few weeks shaping a foreign policy team that is deeply hawkish on China, including his pick for secretary of state, Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, and for national security adviser, Florida Rep. Mike Waltz, who see China as a multi-front threat to the United States, economically, on the high seas and even in space.

“This is a very interesting move by Trump that fits very well with his practice of unpredictability. I don’t think anyone expected

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Getting Xi to fly across the world would be an enormous coup for the president-elect — a fact that would make it politically unfeasible for the Chinese leader. Such a visit would put the Chinese president in the position of paying homage to Trump and American might — which would conflict with his vision for China’s assumption of a rightful role as a preeminent global power. At the inaugural ceremony, Xi would be forced to sit and listen to Trump without having any control over what the new president might say while lacking a right of reply. Xi’s presence would also be seen as endorsing a democratic transfer of power — anathema for an autocrat in a one-party state obsessed with crushing individual expression.
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this,” said Lily McElwee, deputy director and fellow in the Freeman Chair in China Studies at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). McElwee said the invitation should be seen in the context of sticks and carrots that the president-elect is wielding as he gets ready to take over the world’s most critical diplomatic relationship. “This is a very, very cheap carrot. It’s a symbolic carrot — it disrupts the tone of the relationship a little bit in a way that certainly doesn’t undermine US interests.”

Trump’s outreach to Xi comes as expectations mount that tense US-China relations will get even worse in the coming administration with officials determined to build on an already tough line adopted by the Biden administration, which built on a stiffening of policy during the first Trump term.

The rivals are at odds over Taiwan, an island democracy that China regards as part of its territory and that the United States might or might not defend if Xi orders an invasion. China is increasing its cooperation with other US foes in an informal anti-Western axis alongside Russia, North Korea and Iran. Air and naval forces of

Stephen Collinson

the two main Pacific powers often come dangerously close to clashes in the South and East China seas. And lawmakers in both parties accuse China of stealing US economic and military secrets and of failing to live up to international law and trading rules.

Since Trump has already threatened to impose crushing tariffs on China, his attempt to coax Xi to Washington seems like a massive contradiction. And it begs the following question as foreign governments puzzle over how to handle the new US president: How seriously should US allies and adversaries take his bullying tone and volatile policy shifts? Is the true American approach characterized by his hardline officials and policies or is it more accurately represented

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ed by the president-elect’s head-spinning moves, which reveal a zeal for deals and sitting at the negotiating table with the world’s tough-guy leaders? Trump’s latest gambit might feel chaotic — but that doesn’t mean it can’t work.

While Trump’s critics often condemn his unpredictability, his off-the-cuff moves can tip rivals off balance and open potential advantages for the US. For instance, any success that he has in peeling Xi away from Iran, Russia and North Korea would be a huge foreign policy win notwithstanding other US differences with China.

But at the same time, it’s fair to question whether the fire and fury of his first-term foreign policy delivered durable results.

Trump’s views of China are especially confusing — since he seems to believe that Beijing’s mercantilist policies are a direct threat to the US and that it’s been ripping America off for decades. But he still wants to be buddies with Xi. On the campaign trail, Trump repeatedly stressed that Xi was tough and smart and that they were friends — seemingly believing that their cordiality means that the Chinese leader may hold a similar opinion of

him.

Trump expressed this contradiction within a single sentence in an interview with Jim Cramer on CNBC on Thursday. “We’ve been talking and discussing with President Xi, some things and others, other world leaders, and I think we’re going to do very well all around,” Trump said. But he added: “We’ve been abused as a country. We’ve been badly abused from an economic standpoint.”

Trump’s habit of undermining his administration’s tough policy was repeatedly evident in his first term, especially with strongmen like Xi, Russian President Vladimir Putin, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and North Korea’s Kim Jong Un. Sometimes it seemed he took positions simply because everyone was telling him not to.

One of Trump’s former Union are simply meant to improve his negotiating position. But such is the antipathy to China in Washington that trade wars with Beijing could be more enduring and an end in themselves.

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national security advisers, H.R. McMaster, noted in his book “At War with Ourselves” that this was especially pronounced with Putin. “Like his predecessors George W. Bush and Barack Obama, Trump was overconfident in his ability to improve relations with the dictator in the Kremlin,” McMaster wrote. “Trump, the self-described ‘expert dealmaker,’ believed he could build a personal rapport with Putin. Trump’s tendency to be reflexively contrarian only added to his determination. The fact that most foreign policy experts in Washington advocated for a tough approach to the Kremlin seemed only to drive the president to the opposite approach.”

Such contrarianism might be motivating Trump in his early olive branch to Xi. And the president-elect may also forsee a new trade deal with Beijing even if a first-term bilateral pact was largely a bust. The Phase One trade deal he concluded in late 2019 and hailed as “historic” never came to fruition. While Trump turned sharply against Xi months later because of the Covid-19 pandemic that started in the Chinese city of Wuhan, it was never clear that Xi ever intended to fully implement what

a sobering counterargument: Is it possible to maintain human dignity in war, or are we simply paving the way for AI-driven chaos?

Many in Techville are calling for what they describe as “ethical resistance” against the unbridled expansion of weaponized drones. They fear the precedent being set here, where the push for enhanced security might lead to an Orwellian landscape of over-surveillance and AI-driven control.

“These drones may not peck at our windows yet,” Bolt quips, “but they might as well.”

A group of Techville citizens recently gathered in the central square sporting signs reading: “We Have Minds — Machines Have Algorithms” and “Leave Defense to the Humans.”

Among them, Thinkworth waved a placard quoting Aristotle: “Virtue is the golden mean between two vices, one of excess and the other of deficiency.” It is a profound statement, particularly given that these drones, for all their “ethics,” lack the ability to temper justice with mercy, or wisdom with restraint.

Local activist group Ethics Over Autonomy argues that the responsibility for making decisions that could harm or kill should not be outsourced to an artificial “ethics engine.” To highlight their concerns, they held an “AI-Free Day” last week, urging residents

Exerting pressure

Michael Jansen

LAST Week’s Amnesty International report accusing Israel of genocide in Gaza is unprecedented. This is the first time a major global human rights organisation issued such a finding, and the first time Amnesty took this step during an ongoing conflict. Amnesty’s objective was to exert pressure on the Western powers to halt the flow of arms to Israel and end the war.

In the 296-page report, entitled, “You Feel like You Are Subhuman. Israel’s Genocide Against Palestinians in Gaza,” Amnesty documented the impacts of Israel’s military offensive launched in response to the Oct. 7, 2003, attack on southern Israel by Hamas which killed around 1,200 and abducted 251. Since then, Israel has killed 44,500 and wounded 105,500 Palestinians.

The title of the report was suggested by Mohammed whose family was displaced from Gaza City to Rafah in the south and then to Deir al-Balah in the centre of the strip. He said, “Its like an apocalypse... You have to protect your children from insects, from the heat. And there is no clean water, no toilets, all the while the bombing never stops. You feel like you are subhuman here.”

The report documents Israel’s violations of the Genocide Convention adopted in 1948 in the wake of World War II and the Nazi Holocaust. The Convention defines “acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group.” These acts include harming, traumatising or killing members of the group, imposing living conditions meant to destroy the group, preventing births, and abducting the group’s children.

Amnesty’s secretary general Agnes Callamard specifically mentioned the first three: “These acts include killings, causing serious bodily harm and deliberately inflicting on Palestinians in Gaza conditions of life calculated to bring about their physical destruction. Month after month, Israel has treated Palestinians in Gaza as a subhuman group unworthy of human rights and dignity, demonstrating its intent to physically destroy them.”

It is hardly surprising that the US and Germany reject the Amnesty report. “We have said previously and continue to find the

allegations of genocide to be unfounded,” State Department deputy spokesman Vedant Patel stated. He downgraded Amnesty’s well documented findings as “an opinion.” The US provides Israel with 69 per cent of the arms and munitions it imports, including the 900-kilogram bombs dropped on densely populated neighbourhoods in Gaza which have contributed to the deaths of tens of thousands of Palestinians.

German foreign ministry spokesman Sebastian Fischer said: “The question of genocide presupposes a clear intention to eradicate an ethnic group. I still do not recognise any such clear intention and therefore I cannot share the conclusions of the report.” Germany supplies Israel with 39 per cent of imported weapons.

The Israeli military refuted the report by saying it is fighting in self-defence and the accusation of genocide is “entirely baseless.” Once made, however, the accusation is likely to stick.

Despite the dismissals of Washington, Berlin, and Tel Aviv, the Amnesty report could intensify push Israel to temper its military assault on Gaza and on Israel’s friends and allies to boost efforts to halt the war.

Amnesty is not a favourite with the US which has been accused of grave human rights violations during its stewardship of Afghanistan between 2001 and 2021 as well as partnering with serial abusers outside the US and violating domestic activists’ rights.

Amnesty emerged in 1961. Its birth was proclaimed in an article in “The Observer” newspaper by Peter Berenson in an appeal for amnesty for Portuguese student activists who dared challenge the dictatorship of Antonio Salazar who had ruled the country since 1932. Amnesty’s initial campaigns aimed at obtaining freedom for “prisoners of conscience.” Among the well-known figures were Israel’s Mordechai Vanunu who publicised its nuclear weapons programme, Czech activist Vaclav Havel, Bangladesh’s Khaleda Zia who was jailed for corruption after a criticised trial, Malaysia’s Anwar Ibrahim who was accused of corruption, Russia’s political activist Alexei Navalny, and US soldier Kimberly Rivera who was imprisoned for

fleeing to Canada after for refusing to serve in Iraq. South Africa’s Nelson Mandela was rejected by Amnesty because he advocated and took part in violent resistance to the apartheid regime.

In addition to campaigning for freedom for prisoners of conscience, Amnesty aided their families, dispatched observers to trials, and found asylum and jobs for prisoners. Due to its expanding activities, Amnesty was granted consultative status by the United Nations, the Council of Europe and UNESCO.

In 1966, Berenson resigned as chairman after accusing British intelligence and the US Central Intelligence Agency of bugging Amnesty offices and charged senior members with colluding with them. During the 1970s and 1980s, Amnesty exerted pressure on governments to apply standard regulations for the treatment of prisoners and urged the ratification of UN human rights conventions. To secure financial independence, Amnesty was aided by top British comedians to stage entertainments dubbed “Secret Policemen’s Balls” and organised “Conspiracy of Hope” concerts in the US. Amnesty won the 1977 Nobel Peace Prize and the United Nations Prize in the Field of Human Rights in 1978.

During the 1990s, Amnesty joined the battle against the South African apartheid regime, Nigeria’s arrest and execution of activist Ken Saro-Wiwa and the former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet who sought to avoid extradition from Spain over his brutal crackdown on opponents following his coup against leftist Salvador Allende in 1973. Amnesty faced a serious challenge following al Qaeda’s 2001 attack on New York and Washington when the US opened its prison at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba which Amnesty compared to a Soviet Gulag.

As Amnesty’s role has expanded and global support has grown to embrace millions, the movement has tackled major violations of international humanitarian law and war crimes, opening a fresh line of investigation in 2009 and 2014. Amnesty accused Israel and Hamas of committing war crimes during offensives in Gaza, preparing the precarious ground for the 2024 allegation of genocide.

By abusing veto power, Washington is aggravating Palestine-Israel crisis

THE Nations General Assembly voted overwhelmingly on Wednesday in favor of a resolution calling for an immediate cease-fire in Gaza and the immediate release of all detainees. Not surprisingly, the United States voted against it, as it has done in the past.

Wu Yixue

The UNGA resolution would not have been legally binding and may not have deterred Israel from further action in the region, but it was still important as an expression of the international community’s desire for peace.

Ever since the latest round of the Israel-Hamas conflict erupted, Israeli forces have killed nearly 45,000 Palestinians and injured more than 106,000 in Gaza, while survivors are struggling in the absence of basic supplies. Nobody with a conscience can turn a blind eye to Israel’s appalling disregard for civilian lives in Gaza and the selective application of international law and double standards.

The adoption of the UNGA resolution represents the just call of the international community. The world cannot go back to the law of the jungle. A cease-fire in Gaza is a prerequisite for saving lives and restoring peace; setting preconditions for a cease-fire is actually giving a green light to the continuation of the war. Gaza should not be made an exception when it comes to upholding the authority of international law and fulfilling international law obligations. As the architect of Gaza’s disaster, Israel must fulfill its obligations under international humanitarian law, remove all obstacles to humanitarian access, ensure the unblocked distribution of humanitarian supplies throughout Gaza, and guarantee the safety of humanitarian agencies and personnel in Gaza.

While pushing for cease-fire in Gaza, the international community should also try to address the root causes behind the Palestine-Israel conflict, and promote the implementation of the two-state solution with the greatest sense of urgency, because that seems like the only way to achieve lasting peace in the region.

As a responsible coun-

try and promoter of peace between Palestine and Israel, China wants Palestine to become a full member of the UN and the international community should make greater efforts to formulate a timetable and road map for the implementation of the two-state solution.

The US can play a key role in resolving the Palestine-Israel conflict, but its partiality toward Israel is in the way. As one of the framers of the existing world order, the US should use its power responsibly to promote the settlement of international issues such as the Palestine-Israel issue.

Techville’s ethics might crash as weaponized bird-like drones take flight

IN the futuristic town of Techville, where espresso machines take orders via Bluetooth and trash cans rate your recycling efforts with a passive-aggressive LED glare, the air these days is alive with the hum of drones.

But these are not the harmless Unmanned Delivery Vehicles of yore; they are “UAVs with a mission,” as local tech mogul Ivan Dronev likes to call them — armed, autonomous, and engineered for defense.

Yet as residents nervously scan the skies, they wonder: Have the so-called “protectors” turned from allies to adversaries? It seems like a scene straight out of Alfred Hitchcock’s “The Birds” — except these birds have heat-seeking capabilities.

Techville’s citizens had grown accustomed to smart gadgets and artificial intelligence-driven cars, yet the prospect of autonomous, weaponized drones flying overhead has brought more than a whiff of unease.

“There’s a fine line between convenience and control,” says Marla Thinkworth, a philosopher at the local university. She is known for her motto: Quis custodiet ipsos custodes? Who watches the watchers?

As Marla points out, this is not a matter of merely curbing the next-generation Roomba but rather grappling with ethics that Avicenna himself might

have pondered.

“Avicenna once said: ‘The imagination is the agent of the soul,’” she notes with a wry smile.

“In Techville, it seems our imaginations have whipped up a world where our ‘agents of the soul’ have sprouted wings and missiles. The question is, do we trust them?”

Drones, or “defense birds,” as locals sarcastically dub them, were introduced to Techville with the promise of enhanced security and “smart targeting” capabilities.

These UAVs are programmed to identify threats, minimize collateral damage, and act only with “ethical intention” — a vague phrase that does little to clarify exactly where the algorithm draws the line between friend and foe.

Dronev assures the community that these machines are equipped with cutting-edge AI algorithms, learning from past engagements to “become morally sound.” While this all sounds well and good, some Techville sceptics fear that these drones may have a broader mission than merely defending the city.

“The intentions might be ethical, but I wouldn’t want my life on the line over an algorithm’s split-second decision-making,” mutters Fredrick Bolt, a local baker and former tech enthusiast.

He points to a recent case in which one of the drones mistook a delivery van for an imminent threat. “It only baked the van to a crisp,

Rafael Hernández de Santiago

thankfully,” Bolt jokes, his face a blend of humor and concern.

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Much like Hitchcock’s bird-flock frenzy, these drones do not strike individually but in swarms. Autonomous and networked, they communicate faster than the human brain can blink, strategizing, re-evaluating, and adapting.

This is all in an effort to make their “defensive” actions more precise and ethical, according to their engineers. But here lies the crux of the issue: Can ethics truly be programmed?

The ethical implications are especially troubling when it comes to militarizing AI.

“The ethics of AI in warfare isn’t about making these machines nice,” says Thinkworth, looking up at the drones weaving in formation above the city’s skyline. “It’s about making them just. But what is justice to a machine?”

Techville’s top brass argue that their approach to AI governance, which they call “Compassionate Targeting,” is the very essence of ethical warfare. They even went so far as to include a philosopher-in-chief among the council that developed the drones’ algorithms.

But for every council meeting on “Ethical Defense Strategies,” there is



Economic growth and progress: SCCI calls for framing sustainable policies

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Fazal Moqem Khan stressed the need for framing and enforcement of sustainable and durable policies for economic prosperity and development in the country.

Moqem called upon the policymakers, bureaucracy and relevant institutions to outline policies in consultation with chambers to enforce them without any delay or hurdles.

SCCI chief demanded KP's all constitutional rights with regard to natural resources, i.e electricity and gas should be ensured to revive and flourish economic and trade activities and generate maximum employment opportunities in the province.

Moqem was speaking to members during a study tour of 31-members of Mid-career management

training officers under Kashmir Institute of Management (KIM), Azad Jammu and Kashmir, headed by Directing Staff, KIM, AJK Tariq Mehmood Butt, here at the chamber house.

SCCI senior vice president Abdul Jalil Jan, former presidents Fuad Ishaq, Faiz Muhammad Faizi, and Ihsanullah, Ishtiaq Ahmad Paracha, Saddam Gul, Faiz Rasool, Secretary General SCCI Muqtasid Ahsan, traders and industrialists were present in the meeting.

Moqem said the natural resources-rich KP province is lagging behind in the race of development as compared to other federating units, which is a matter of grave concern.

Being a frontline KP province in war against terrorism, he said the business community has faced enormous difficulties and continued business and trade by rendering sacrifices and

martyrdoms, so we highly appreciate them because doing business in KP is not less than a holy war [Jehad].

Sharing figure about the gas production in KP, Moqem said the province is producing 500MMCFDs gas against its only 200mmcfd consumption and rest of surplus gas is exporting to national grid, despite the fact that KP had put in RLNG basket, which is completely unjust and unacceptable.

The SCCI chief informed that the total oil production of KP is 31,000/barrel which is 42 percent of the country's total production. He demanded the establishment of an oil refinery in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Moqem said KP business and trade mostly attached with Afghanistan, therefore, he urged government and relevant institutions to remove hurdles in the way of bilateral and

transit trade to enhance trade volume between the neighboring countries.

He mentioned due to far away from port city, the KP business community has faced with severe difficulties and now KP government had added to miseries of traders by imposing 2 percent Infrastructure Development Cess on export, which should be abolished immediately.

The chamber president mentioned the flight of capital and brain drain from KP, stating that due to poor law and order situation, investors were reluctant to visit the province.

Earlier, the senior officers' delegation apprised about the historic importance, role, different initiatives for welfare and betterment of the business community, future plan and working of the Sarhad chamber through a comprehensive multi-media documentary.

SBP injects over Rs9.89t in market

KARACHI (APP): The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), on Friday, injected Rs9893.6 billion in the market through reverse repo purchase and Shariah Compliant Mudarabah based Open Market Operation (OMO).

The SBP conducted Open Market Operation, Reverse Repo Purchase (Injection) on December 13, 2024 for 7-day and 28-day tenors and, as per results issued, accepted an amount of Rs9553.6 billion offered through 29 bids.

The central bank received 29 bids for 7-day tenor cumulatively offering an amount of Rs9553.6 billion at the rate of return ranging from 15.04 to 15.10 percent while no bid was received for the 28-day tenor. The central bank accepted the entire amount offered through 29 bids for 7-day tenor at the 15.04% rate of return.

Meanwhile, SBP also conducted Shariah Compliant Mudarabah based Open Market Operation for the 7-day and 28-day tenors. The central bank received 4 bids for 7-day tenor quoting an amount of Rs340 billion at the rate of return ranging between 15.08 to 15.12 % while no bid was received for 28-day tenor.

The SBP accepted the entire amount offered through 4 quotes for 7-day tenor at 15.08% rate of return.

Shipping activity at PQ

KARACHI (APP): Five ships, Teno, GFS Ruby, Split, DM Corndor and Maran Gas Efessos carrying container, Soya Bean, Chemicals and LNG, berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal, Grain Terminal, Engro Vopak Terminal and Port Gas Terminal respectively the other day.

Meanwhile six more ships, River Side, EVA Pearl, Wisco Adventure, Sea Wolf, Hafnia Excellence and Spar Vega scheduled to load/offload Furnace oil, Palm oil, Mogas, Gas oil and Coal are also arrived at outer anchorage during last 24 hours.

Eleven ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them three ships, Teno, GFS Ruby and Milaha Qatar left the port on today morning, while three more ships, Acuity, DS Sofia Bulker and DM Condor are expected to sail on today afternoon.

Cargo volume of 123,640 tonnes, comprising 110,244 tonnes imports cargo and 13,396 tonnes export cargo carried in 1,640 Containers (1,015 TEUs Imports & 625 TEUs Export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

Twelve ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them three ships, Ken Colon, Kouras Queen and River Side & another ship 'MSC Positano' scheduled to load/offload Rice, Furnace oil and Containers are expected to take berths at MW-1, MW-2, FOTCO and QICT respectively on today Friday, while another containers ship 'SSL Godavari' due to arrive at port on Saturday.

DPC releases annual report FY 2023-24

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Deposit Protection Corporation (DPC) announces the release of its fourth Annual Report for the fiscal year ended June 2024. The report has been issued with the objective of providing complete disclosure of the Corporation's financial performance, operating activities, and achievements.

DPC was established under the Deposit Protection Corporation Act, 2016 and operates as a subsidiary of the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) with the mandate to compensate banks' depositors in the unlikely event of any bank failure as and when notified by SBP. The annual report of DPC for the year 2023-24 provides a graphical illustration of total and eligible deposits and the coverage ratio of banks' depositors. As of June 30, 2024, there exist 79.2 million depositors of scheduled banks, out of which more than 78 million are eligible depositors and their deposits are protected up to the extent of the protected deposit amount as specified by the Corporation.

The report indicates DPC's robust deposit protection fund standing at total PKR 148 billion, which is a testimony to DPC's efforts towards fulfilling its mandate of compensating the losses incurred by the eligible depositors of any member bank in the unlikely event of its failure. Therefore, it emphasizes DPC's role in promoting financial stability in Pakistan.

The annual report illustrates key features of deposit protection scheme and its targeted awareness campaigns and informative sessions conducted in various regions of the country. A comprehensive financial review with comparative analyses spanning five years, along with auditor's report and audited financial statements for 2023-24 have also been disclosed.

Pakistan Cables wins prestigious Corporate Excellence Awards 2024



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Cables Limited has once again achieved a remarkable milestone by winning the 39th Corporate Excellence Award 2024 in the Cables and Electrical Goods category. This marks the fourth consecutive year that Pakistan Cables has been recognized for its exemplary performance.

The award was presented during a prestigious ceremony organized by the Management Association of Pakistan in Karachi.

Waqas Mahmood, Chief Financial Officer of Pakistan Cables Limited, received the award on

behalf of the company from Murad Ali Shah, Chief Minister of Sindh, who graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. This recognition reaffirms Pakistan Cables' dedication to setting new benchmarks in corporate governance and operational excellence.

Fahd K. Chinoy, CEO of Pakistan Cables, also delivered the keynote address at the ceremony, highlighting Pakistan Cables as a case study on change management in the corporate sector.

The Corporate Excellence Awards was instituted by MAP in 1982 to recognize and honour companies in Pakistan that demonstrate outstanding performance,

progress and enlightened management practices consistently.

Pakistan Cables is the premiere and most reputable cable manufacturer in Pakistan. It is also a member company of the Amir S. Chinoy group. The company has the largest geographical footprint in Pakistan with presence in over 180 cities.

It is ISO9001:2015, ISO 14001:2015 AND OHSAS 18001:2007 certified and various cables type tested by KEMA, Netherlands. Pakistan Cables is the only building material company in Pakistan that has its carbon emission reduction targets approved and validated by SBTi.

Conference on tourism for diplomats hosted

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Africa Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted a conference on tourism for diplomats under the chairmanship of Additional Foreign Secretary for Africa Hamid Asghar Khan.

The briefing was aimed at introducing the Pakistan Travel and Tourism Mart Expo, which will be held at Expo Center Karachi from January 31 to February 2, 2025.

The conference was attended by Deputy Chiefs of Missions of Morocco, Somalia, Kenya, Rwanda, Turkey, Malaysia, Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan, South Africa, Azerbaijan. Ambassadors and High Commissioners of African countries also participated in the conference.

Additional Foreign Secretary for Africa Hamid Asghar Khan was praised for the initiative of organizing this conference on tourism. The ambassadors participating in the conference said that there are numerous opportunities for tourism in Pakistan, there is a need to improve infrastructure and activate air connectivity.

Tourism has become the



world's largest industry. Nature has blessed Pakistan with attractive tourist destinations consisting of high mountains as well as beautiful valleys, beaches and deserts, and tourists from all over the world are visiting Pakistan.

On this occasion, MD PTDC Aftab-ur-Rehman Rana also gave a detailed briefing to the ambassadors about the tourism sector. This is the first time that a large number of foreign ambassadors and diplomats participated in this consultative conference on tourism through the efforts of Hamid Asghar Khan in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

On the invitation of Honorary Consul General of Ghana Omar Shahid Butt Consul Generals of different countries attended the conference. Among the participants were Consul General of Lithuania Masood Khan. Honorary Consul General of Belarus Consul General Waleed Mushtaq, Consul General of Finland Asad Ansari was also present.

Professionals from the hospitality industry also attended the conference. This public diplomacy was an initiative to connect with the people of Pakistan with the world and attract tourists.

On this occasion, Hamid Asghar Khan said that our effort is to connect the world with Pakistan, after the Corona epidemic, it is the effort of developing countries around the world to promote tourism. In the United States, tourists from all over the world spend \$ 180 billion in a year, while in France, tourism generates \$ 80 billion every year.

Similarly, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Tunisia have made remarkable progress in the tourism sector. Pakistan also has a lot of potential for development in the tourism sector. We have the most beautiful beaches in the world, mountains and we also have an ancient culture that can attract tourists. Along with this, Pakistan has special importance in terms of religious tourism. There is a need to present these factors to the world in a proper manner. Pakistan Travel Mart is Pakistan's premier tourism event, being held after a gap of four years after the Corona pandemic. Hopefully, it will be a success.

The conference participants agreed that security, infrastructure and a moderate social culture are essential ingredients for tourism.

Stock Exchange stays bullish, gains 121 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bullish trend on Friday, gaining 121.29 points, a positive change of 0.11 percent, closing at 114,301.80 points as compared to 114,180.51 points on the last trading day.

A total of 1,118,570,230 shares were traded during the day as compared to 1,469,558,531 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs59,511 billion against Rs67,278 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 461 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 178 of them recorded gains and 251 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 32 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were WorldCall Telecom 129,897,250 shares at Rs1.79 per share, Pak International Bulk with 75,509,313 shares at Rs9.67 per share and Treet Corp. with 47,769,875 shares at Rs24.49 per share. Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs162.39

per share price, closing at Rs20,974.99, whereas the runner-up was Hoechst Pakistan Limited with Rs140.93 rise in its per share price to Rs2,815.00.

Bhanero Textile Mills Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs58.11 per share closing at Rs791.89 followed by Al-Abbas Sugar Mills Limited with Rs26.56 decline to close at Rs756.79.

Rupee gains 12 paise against dollar: Pakistani rupee on Friday appreciated by 12 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs278.11 against the previous day's closing of Rs278.23. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan, the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs277.60 and Rs279.15 respectively.

The price of Euro decreased by Rs1.54 to close at Rs291.06 against the last day's closing of Rs292.60, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese yen remained came down by 01 paise and closed at Rs1.81, whereas a decrease of

Rs3.87 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs351.24 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs355.11. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal decreased by 04 and 03 paise to close at Rs75.71 and Rs74.01, respectively.

Gold prices decrease by Rs5,000 per tola: The price of 24 karat per tola gold decreased by Rs5,000 and was sold at Rs277,800 on Friday against its sale at Rs282,800 on previous trading day. All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs4,286 to Rs238,169 from Rs242,455 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat also went down to Rs218,321 from Rs222,250. The prices of Per tola silver decreased by Rs.50 to Rs3,400 whereas that of ten gram silver went down by Rs42.86 to Rs2,914.86 respectively. The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$50 to \$2,666 from \$2,716, the Association reported.

SBP to announce monetary policy on Monday

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) will announce Monetary Policy on Monday, December 16, 2024 following the meeting of Monetary Policy Committee. The central bank, in a statement issued here on Friday, announced that Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of SBP

will be held on December 16 to decide about the Monetary Policy.

The MPC will review overall financial and fiscal situation, major economic indicators, data of different sectors and major developments taken place since announcement of the previous monetary policy while its decisions would be conveyed by the central bank through the Monetary

Policy Statement.

The Monetary Policy Committee, in its previous meeting on November 4, 2024, slashed for the fourth consecutive time since June 2024, the policy rate by 250 basis points to 15 percent owing to faster than expected decline in inflation, expanding foreign reserves and better prospects of commodity-producing sectors.



VAL THORENS, FRANCE: Alex Fiva of Team Switzerland, Adam Kappacher of Team Austria takes joint 1st place, Kevin Drury of Team Canada takes 3rd place during the FIS Ski Cross World Cup Ski Cross.

Quaid-e-Azam Inter-Provincial Games 2024 374 members contingent from KP departed to Islamabad

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In order to participate in Quaid-e-Azam Inter-Provincial Games 2024, a 374 members contingent from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa departed on Friday from Peshawar Sports Complex.

The contingent was officially sent off by the Provincial Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Syed Fakhar Jihan.

These games scheduled to be held in Islamabad from December 14 to 19, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa athletes will compete in 15 male and 11 female events.

While addressing the athletes during the send-off ceremony, Minister Syed Fakhar Jihan expressed his best wishes and announced a monthly stipend of Rs. 25,000 for gold medal winners at the Quaid-e-Azam Games, along with cash prizes for all medalists.

He encouraged the athletes to enter the field with passion and fully utilize their talents to bring glory to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He emphasized the

Unveiling ceremony Trophy held

ISLAMABAD (APP): The grand unveiling ceremony of the Quaid-e-Azam Inter-Provincial Games' trophy was held at the Jinnah Stadium of Pakistan Sports Complex Islamabad on Friday. The trophy was unveiled by Pakistan's Olympic gold medalist in javelin throw Arshad Nadeem.

Arshad expressed his enthusiasm and encouragement for the young athletes during the event. The ceremony was also attended by the Director General of Pakistan Sports Board, Yasir Pirzada. Addressing the audience, Arshad highlighted the significance of the event, saying, "This is a major step towards the promotion of sports in Pakistan. It will provide young athletes with an excellent opportunity to showcase their talent. I am hopeful that this platform will help produce international level players for the country."

Yasir Pirzada emphasized the objectives of the games, stating, "The purpose of this event is to highlight the existing sports talent in the country and provide the youngsters with opportunities to grow. We are optimistic that these competitions will play a pivotal role in bringing new talent to the forefront." The opening ceremony of Quaid-e-Azam Inter-Provincial Games is scheduled to take place on Saturday at Jinnah Stadium. Teams comprising male and female athletes from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Sindh, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Islamabad will participate in the games. The games will feature competitions in 15 sports disciplines, including athletics, badminton, boxing, football, hockey, judo, kabaddi, karate, squash, swimming, taekwondo, table tennis, volleyball, weightlifting and wrestling.

At the conclusion of the event, trophies and prizes will be distributed among the winning athletes to recognize their hard work and outstanding performance. The Quaid-e-Azam Inter-Provincial Games aim to inspire a renewed passion for sports while serving as an exceptional platform for young athletes to demonstrate their skills on a global stage.

immense talent among Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's athletes and expressed confidence that they would perform better among competitors from other provinces to win the maximum number of medals.

The event was also

attended by Establishment Jan, Deputy Operations Jamshed Baloch, Assistant Director Accounts Shah Faisal, along with all managers and coaches of the participating teams. Notably Provincial

Minister Syed Fakhar Jihan will represent the province and Director General Sports Abdul Nasir Khan will lead the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa contingent during the opening ceremony of the Quaid-e-Azam Games on Saturday at Islamabad Sports Board.

Imad Wasim announces retirement from international cricket

F.P. Report

KARACHI : Pakistani cricketer Imad Wasim has announced his retirement from international cricket. The all-rounder, who has been an integral part of Pakistan's cricket team for several years, made the decision to step away from the sport at the international level.

Imad Wasim has had a successful career, contributing both with the ball and the bat. His announcement marks the end of his active involvement in international cricket, though he has not yet confirmed his future plans in the sport.

Imad Wasim tweeted: "To all fans & supporters: After much thought and reflection, I have decided to retire from international cricket. Representing Pakistan on the world stage has been the greatest honor of my life, and every moment wearing the green jersey has been unforgettable."

"Your unwavering support, love, and passion have always been my biggest strength.



From the highs to the lows, your encouragement has pushed me to give my best for our beloved country," he said.

While this chapter comes to an end, I look forward to continuing my journey in cricket through domestic and franchise cricket, and I hope to keep entertaining you all in new ways.

Thank you for everything. Pakistan

Imad Wasim's cricket

profile Imad Wasim, born on December 18, 1988, in Lahore, Pakistan, is an accomplished cricketer known for his skills as an all-rounder.

He made his debut for Pakistan in 2015, showcasing his talent in both limited-overs and Test cricket. Imad is a left-arm orthodox spinner and a handy left-handed batsman, which made him a valuable asset to the team.

His career highlight came during the ICC Champions Trophy 2017, where he played a key role in Pakistan's victory, contributing with both bat and ball. Imad has been known for his economical bowling and his ability to control the middle overs, making him a key player in Pakistan's limited-overs team.

Throughout his career, Imad Wasim has represented Pakistan in multiple formats, including T20 internationals, ODIs, and Test matches. His consistency, especially in the shorter formats, earned him a reputation as one of the finest all-rounders of his generation.

Imad has also played in various domestic and franchise leagues, including the Pakistan Super League (PSL), where his performances with Karachi Kings have been notable. His retirement marks the end of an era for the Pakistan cricket team, but he remains a highly respected figure in the world of cricket.

2nd National Women's Lacrosse Championship kicks off at Abbottabad

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The 2nd National Women's Lacrosse Championship kicked off at Abbottabad. Nine teams from across the country are participating in the championship, including Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, Hazara, Balochistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Islamabad. A total of 120 women players are participating in the championship.

The official inauguration was conducted by Safer Ahmad, Secretary General of Hattar Industrial Estate. In the opening match, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa won 3-2 against Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJ&K). Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Miss Gul Pari was declared the Most Valuable Player (MVP) for her outstanding performance, who scored two goals.



During the ceremony, Safer Ahmad welcomed the participants on behalf of the Hazara region and Abbottabad, emphasizing the vital role of sports in society, particularly for women's empowerment. He encouraged continued efforts to promote women's participation in sports.

He stressed the need to

promote women's participation in sports. Engineer Taifur Zarin, Secretary General Pakistan Lacrosse Federation, expressed his heartfelt gratitude to Safer Ahmed and said that the spirit of sports in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is alive because of such dedicated individuals.

At the event, special

children from Kingston School for Inclusive Education presented a brilliant performance and welcomed the participants. Engineer Taifur Zarin also announced the establishment of a lacrosse academy, equipment and kits for Kingston School for Inclusive Children, Abbottabad.

Shakib Al Hasan suspended from bowling in ECB-run cricket

L O N D O N (ESPNcricinfo): Shakib Al Hasan's has been suspended from bowling in all competitions organised by the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), after his action was found illegal at independent testing at Loughborough University earlier this month. Shakib's action had been called into question by the umpires in September, in his one-off appearance for Surrey in

the County Championship.

To overturn the suspension, Shakib will need to pass an independent reassessment of his action - that is, his degree of elbow extension in testing will need to be below the 15-degree threshold laid out in the regulations.

The suspension is officially dated from December 10, the date when the ECB received the results of the assessment from

Loughborough University.

Shakib claimed nine wickets in that match for Surrey in Taunton in September, his first appearance in county cricket since 2010-11.

Of late, Shakib's career has been marred by controversy stemming from his role as a Member of Parliament in the now overturned Awami League government in Bangladesh, following protests in which

several hundred civilians - mostly university students - were killed in July and August. He has retired from T20Is and eventually withdrew from travelling to Bangladesh (he is based in the USA with his family) for what would have been his farewell Test in Mirpur in October, as protests - for and against him - were staged in Dhaka. He has not played international cricket since then.

Man City announce record Premier League revenue

LONDON (AFP): Manchester City posted record revenues for a Premier League club last season as the champions' income increased to £715 million (\$903 million).

As City marched to an unprecedented fourth successive Premier League title last term, their revenue rose from £712.8million to the new record mark for the year to June 30.

However, profits dipped from £80.4 million in City's treble-winning 2022-23 campaign to £73.8 million last season.

They experienced a drop in broadcast income due to Pep Guardiola's side failing to repeat their run to win a first Champions League crown in 2023.

City's current investments include a £300 million expansion of the north stand of the Etihad Stadium.

Chairman Khaldoon Al Mubarak said in the club's annual report: "Our constant ambition to target and achieve the unprecedented is a mark of the organisation that we have become.

"On and off the field,

our passion for the next challenge is underpinned by deliberate and detailed planning and a shared belief in the collaborative learning culture that we have built.

"Our focus remains on further evolution and growth and therefore further value creation in all aspects of our business."

Beaten by Juventus in the Champions League on Wednesday, City face Manchester United in the Premier League on Sunday as they try to halt a damaging run of one win in 10 games in all competitions.

They are in danger of failing to make the Champions League last 16 and sit eight points behind Premier League leaders Liverpool after their shocking slump.

City are awaiting a decision on the 115 charges of alleged breaches of financial rules brought against them by the Premier League.

The club, who have strongly denied the charges, could face a points deduction or even relegation from the top-flight if they are found guilty.

China jails former Premier League star Li Tie 20 years

BEIJING (AFP): China on Friday jailed former Premier League star and men's national coach Li Tie for 20 years for bribery, snaring one of the country's greatest football figures in a sweeping government crackdown on corruption in sport.

President Xi Jinping has waged an unrelenting campaign against deep-seated official corruption since coming to power over a decade ago.

Anti-graft authorities took aim at the sport industry in 2022 and have announced a string of con-

victions for former football administrators this week.

In the highest-profile case to date, a court in central Hubei province said Friday that Li had been sentenced to "fixed-term imprisonment of 20 years" after being found guilty of a string of offenses relating to giving and receiving bribes.

The 47-year-old is one of China's biggest football names, serving as national team coach from January 2020 to December 2021, after racking up nearly 100 international caps and playing as a midfielder for

English Premier League side Everton.

But state broadcaster CCTV said he used his status as China coach to extract nearly 51 million yuan (\$7 million) in bribes in return for selecting players for the national team or helping them sign for clubs.

Li also "asked others to help him" become the national coach in 2019 and handed the unnamed people one million yuan the following year, according to CCTV.

During his tenure at now-defunct Chinese Super League (CSL) side Wuhan

Zall, Li also colluded with club chiefs to hand out bribes in an effort to secure the national team job, the broadcaster said.

It also listed other accusations that Li and his previous clubs had paid the equivalent of millions of dollars in bribes to seal player transfers and fix match results stretching back to 2015.

A photograph of Li published by CCTV showed the disgraced sportsman in the court dock, wearing a black hooded sweater and flanked by two police officers.

Home nations discover World Cup qualifying opponents

ZURICH (BBC): England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have discovered their 2026 World Cup qualifying opponents following Friday's draw in Zurich.

England, under new head coach Thomas Tuchel, will face Serbia, Albania, Latvia and Andorra.

Wales will meet familiar foes Belgium, plus North Macedonia, Kazakhstan and Liechtenstein.

Scotland will play Greece, Belarus and the loser of the Portugal v Denmark Nations League quarter-final.

Northern Ireland are up against Slovakia, Luxembourg and the winner of the Germany v Italy Nations League game.

The top team from each of the 12 groups qualifies automatically for the World Cup, which will be held in the US, Canada and Mexico - with the second-placed teams going into the play-offs. A total of 16 European teams will qualify.

Scotland and Northern Ireland have been drawn in four-team groups and will not start their games until September.

The Scots face Greece, who are coincidentally also in their World Cup qualifying group, in a two-legged Nations League promotion-relegation play-off in March.

The draw in full Some of the groups will not be finalised until after the Nations League quarter-finals in March

Group A:

Germany/Italy (winner), Slovakia, NORTHERN IRELAND, Luxembourg.

Group B: Switzerland, Sweden, Slovenia, Kosovo.

Group C: Portugal/Denmark (loser), Greece, SCOTLAND, Belarus.

Group D: France/Croatia (winner), Ukraine, Iceland, Azerbaijan.

Group E: Spain/Netherlands (winner), Turkey, Georgia, Bulgaria.

Group F: Portugal/Denmark (winner), Hungary, Republic of Ireland, Armenia.

Group G: Spain/Netherlands (loser), Poland, Finland, Lithuania, Malta.

Group H: Austria, Romania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cyprus, San Marino.

Group I: Germany/Italy (loser), Norway, Israel, Estonia, Moldova.

Group J: Belgium, WALES, North Macedonia, Kazakhstan, Liechtenstein.

Group K: ENGLAND, Serbia, Albania, Latvia, Andorra.

Group L: France/Croatia (loser), Czech Republic, Montenegro, Faroe Islands, Gibraltar.

Tuchel, who will name his first England squad in March, said he does not see reaching the World Cup finals "as a given".

"Qualification is key," he told BBC Radio 5 Live. "We have to be serious and determined and show what we're up for."

"The gap closes more and more between the big and small nations. We have to earn our top spot."

Scotland will not know

whether they play Portugal or Denmark until March, and do not know where the game against Belarus will be played.

Recent Belarus home games have been staged at neutral venues because of ongoing conflict in neighbouring Ukraine.

"First off, it's to find out where the game will be played," Scotland head coach Steve Clarke said.

"The most important thing is to concentrate on the team, the players, the way they're going to play and make sure that wherever we play them and - put all the political stuff aside, for me - it's just to concentrate that we get the points that we require from that game."

Speaking about Northern Ireland's game with Italy, manager Michael O'Neill told BBC Sport NI: "We

don't have anything to lose in that type of situation, playing one of the powerhouses of football.

"The way the group has come out, we'd have taken that before the draw."

Wales head coach Craig Bellamy, who was appointed in July, said he was happy to be in a five-team group so his side do not have to wait until September to start off.

"I lived in Brussels so that's nice," he said, referencing the time he spent on the Anderlecht coaching staff. "Belgium are a team I know very well."

"I'm happy. It's a good group. We're going to have to do our homework very well and try to attack it and finish top of the group."

Six of the groups have four teams and six have five teams.

Teams will play each

other home and away as usual.

The top team from each group qualifies automatically for the World Cup, with the runners-up going into the play-offs with four Nations League teams.

Those 16 play-off teams will be put into pots based on their records in the group and drawn into four paths with single-leg semi-finals and finals.

The games will be held over 10 matchdays during five international breaks.

Those international breaks are 21-25 March, 6-10 June, 4-9 September, 9-14 October and 13-18 November.

However, no team will play World Cup qualifiers on all of those dates because there is a maximum of eight games. They can play friendlies on any free dates.

Some teams will start in March, others will start in June, and four-team groups will not start until September.

Scotland and the Republic of Ireland, for example, will be playing Nations League promotion-relegation play-offs instead in March.

Teams who win the Nations League quarter-finals will not be in World Cup qualifying action until September.

The play-offs will be on 26-31 March 2026.

The World Cup will start on 11 June 2026 in Mexico City and end on 19 July in New Jersey.

The expanded 48-team tournament will last a record 39 days.

The new format will feature 12 four-team groups and a last-32 knockout round for the first time.



In brief

Anti-polio drive launched

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration on Friday launched a seven-day anti-polio campaign, aiming to vaccinate 461,125 children upto the age of five years. According to the spokesman of ICT administration, Deputy Commissioner Irfan Nawaz Memon, kicked off the campaign by administering anti-polio drops to children under five years of age at a local bus stand. Speaking on the occasion, Memon said that the campaign would continue till December 22 and polio teams will go door-to-door across union councils to vaccinate children. The teams will also be stationed at bus stands, schools, and other public locations to ensure full coverage. Memon said, in addition to vaccinations, an awareness drive will run simultaneously to inform citizens about the importance of the polio vaccine. DC Islamabad has urged citizens to cooperate with the polio teams, emphasising the importance of safeguarding children's health.

83,100 cusecs water released

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 83,100 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 42,500 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1478.38 feet and was 80.38 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 19,900 cusecs and 41,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1143.65 feet, which was 93.65 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 5,500 cusecs and 25,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 45,800, 42,600, 35,000 and 6,700 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 11,700 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 1,900 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Students witness NA proceedings

ISLAMABAD (APP): Students from Hazara University, Mansehra, observed the proceedings of the National Assembly on Friday. The Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah, announced their presence in the guests' gallery and house members welcomed them by applauding and thumping their desks.

AIOU holds workshop

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University, in collaboration with RELO, successfully organized a one-day workshop on "Pronunciation Pedagogy" at the University's main campus here Friday. The event brought together educators, trainers and linguists to explore innovative strategies for teaching English pronunciation effectively. Dr. Noor Aamna, Managing Director of the National Academy of Higher Education, Higher Education Commission, was the chief guest at the workshop. She highlighted the importance of such activities for improving English language teaching. Dr. Aamna urged participants to share the techniques and skills they acquired from the workshop with their colleagues so that the teaching process could become more effective and standardized, benefiting a larger number of teachers and students.

ISLAMABAD (APP): Coordinator to Prime Minister on Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam, has said reliable and evidence-based data plays a crucial role in driving development across various sectors, be it economic, social, technological or environmental. Because, it fosters innovation by providing insights into trends, consumer behavior and market needs, she said.

"The role of data in driving socio-economic development has become increasingly vital in many countries, particularly for developing countries like Pakistan, where gaps for credible data continue to block efforts for achieving various development goals and evidence-based policy and decision making," the PM's climate aide said in her keynote address to the concluding ceremony of the three-day capacity-building workshop 'Data for Development' organized here on Friday by UN Population

Fund in collaboration with the Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Ministry, Sustainable Development Policy Institute and other development partner organisations. Highlighting the unprecedented significance of the evidence-based and credible data, she told the participants from various governmental and non-governmental organisations at the event that as the country grapples with challenges such as poverty, inequality, unemployment, and climate change, data is the foundation for crafting policies, designing programmes and ensuring accountability in development efforts.

"We politicians and policymakers must understand the power of data for socio-economic development and that Properly collected, analyzed and utilized data holds key to unlocking the potential for sustainable growth, social equity, poverty reduction, general development and equality,

disaster resilience, environmental protection and improved quality of life for all citizens," Romina Khurshid Alam remarked.

She also said that effective governance and policy making required evidence-based decisions. However, accurate, real-time data is critical as it can help policymakers in the country identify the most urgent needs in sectors such as education, health, agriculture, and infrastructure. For instance, by analysing poverty data and mapping regions with high poverty levels, the government can direct resources more efficiently to uplift marginalized communities. Data also helps track progress in various development goals, including poverty reduction, education, and healthcare improvements, she added.

Romina Khurshid Alam said that that for tackling growing environmental degradation, declining access to safe sanitation and drink-

ing water as well as climate-resilience environments, real-time available data on environmental conditions, such as deforestation rates, water usage or carbon emissions, can be of unprecedented significance to efforts for achieving environmental sustainability and climate resilience.

Because, it helps inform policies that balance economic growth with environmental preservation. Accurate data helps track sustainability goals, such as those related to climate change, renewable energy, or conservation efforts, she added.

Data can also play a vital role in identifying the pockets and causes of poverty in Pakistan. By using poverty indices, household surveys, and income distribution data, the government and NGOs can better target poverty alleviation programs, ensuring that aid reaches those who need it most, she emphasized.

The PM's climate aide

further added that the country's healthcare sector faced significant challenges, such as limited access to quality healthcare services, especially in rural areas. Health data—such as disease prevalence, vaccination coverage and healthcare facility distribution—can help allocate resources effectively and improve access to medical services. For example, data tracking the spread of diseases like polio or dengue allows for timely interventions to control outbreaks.

Romina Khurshid Alam also said that the role of data in promoting transparency and accountability cannot be over-exaggerated. Data promotes transparency in both government and development projects, she highlighted.

"Open data initiatives in Pakistan can help citizens, civil society organizations, and the media hold the government accountable for its policies and spending. Access to data on public

spending, infrastructure projects, and social programs ensures that resources are being used efficiently and that corruption is minimized. By making data publicly available, Pakistan can also attract international investors who value transparency and stability," the PM's climate aide remarked.

She said that Pakistan was home to a diverse groups of population, and targeted development interventions were critical to meet the specific socio-economic needs of different groups.

"Data on gender, ethnicity, disability, and rural-urban disparities can help design policies that promote inclusion. Data showing low female literacy rates or poor healthcare access in certain regions, for instance, can inform targeted programs aimed at improving conditions for women and girls," the climate aide Romina Khurshid Alam remarked.

In an increasingly globalized, interconnected and data-driven world, the role of data in shaping Pakistan's development trajectory is more critical than ever.

"The present government, in collaboration with international organisations and development partners, is already started making significant strides toward using data as a tool for promoting inclusive and sustainable growth," she highlighted.

Romina stressed, "There is pressing need for us all, particularly government officials, policymakers and politicians that data is not just about numbers; it is about people. By utilizing data effectively, we can ensure that the policies we design and implement reach the people who need them the most. Our commitment to data-driven development will enhance transparency, accountability, and efficiency across all sectors of society."

Advancing gender equality in legislation:

Workshop on gender sensitive legislative drafting organized



F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Women's Parliamentary Caucus (WPC), led by MNA Dr. Shahida Rehmani, Secretary WPC, is proud to host an international workshop titled "Advancing Gender Equality in Legislation: A Workshop on Gender-Sensitive Legislative Drafting".

The two-day workshop

is being held at the Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services (PIPS), Sector F-5 Islamabad from December 14 to December 15, 2024. This prestigious event will convene experts, policymakers, and legislators from Commonwealth Parliamentarians to foster dialogue and collaboration on embedding gender equity into legislative processes.

Participants will represent diverse nations, international organizations, and advocacy groups. The workshop will explore global best practices in gender-sensitive legislative drafting and address pressing issues such as removing systemic biases in existing laws, promoting women's representation,

and ensuring that new legislation meets the needs of all genders.

Dr. Shahida Rehmani, a trailblazer advancing women's rights and inclusive governance, will lead this transformative initiative. The event will feature renowned international speakers and panelists, making it a unique platform for exchanging innovative ideas and fostering cross-border partnerships. This international gathering underscores Pakistan's commitment to championing gender equality on the global stage. Join us in this landmark effort to reshape legislative frameworks for a more equitable and inclusive world.

‘ICT admin all set for major digital overhaul’

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration is set to undergo a major digital transformation, with key reforms entering into final stages.

This was stated during a meeting on digital policy, chaired by the Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon, said an ICT administration spokesperson.

In the meeting, key decisions were made to implement a digital policy aimed at modernizing administrative processes and public services.

The meeting was briefed on digital system for pay-

ment of fines and decision was made to digitize the payment system, which aims to provide a transparent method for processing transactions, including fines.

The office affairs of the district administration will also be shifted to a digital framework, with the introduction of a record management system. It was decided in the meeting that a record management system would also be established under an automated system.

One of the key highlights of the new digital policy is the decision to make land records available

online.

This move is expected to make the process of checking and updating land records quicker and more accessible, benefiting both residents and administrative staff.

Speaking at the meeting, DC Irfan Memon said that these digital reforms are designed to enhance transparency in district administration and ensure smoother operations. Administrative affairs will be completed on time with an automated system, he added.

The meeting was attended by the Assistant Commissioner Saddar and IT experts.

IESCO notifies power suspension programme

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

According to IESCO Spokesperson, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM. Islamabad Circle, PC, TDCP, MCM, Gharayal, Kohala, Sunny Bank, G-8/2, Tufel Shaheed, N.Lab.I, Sohan, Lohi Bhair, F-10/4, Peshawar Mor, H8, New Exchange, Gola.II, F-11 Tower, Shahpur, Pindi Point, Upper Topa, University Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle, Dhok Hasso, Pirodhai, Quaidabad, Muslimabad, Industrial, Social Security, Bagh Sardaran, Dhok Mangtal, Alamabad, DM Mill, Ratta, Railway Colony, 4th Road, New Malpur, Khurram Colony, KRL, Muslim Town, Airport, Zar-ul-Haq, Jamia Masjid, Gulshanabad, Gowalmandi, Dhok Khaba,

Mangatal, Social Security Hospital, Muslimabad, Rajahabad, Tench Bhata, Radio Pak.I, Bajniyal, Bijniyal.II, Range Road Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Fuji Foundation, Morgah, Mehboob Shaheed, Mohra Nagyal, Wilaayat Complex, X-Liar, AOWHS, Park View, Pindi Board, Jyl Park.I, Car Chowk, Hyder Road, Tipu Road, Rahmatabad.I, Sohan, National Park, Humayun Road, Gulshanabad, Kohala, Gurja.I, Jhawara, Chakri, New Chuah, Fazal Ahmed Shaheed, Sahala College, Sagri, Nad, Kambili Sadiq, Nara Matur, Mandira, PAECHS, Sukhu, Syed Kasran, Gagan Feeders, Attock Circle, Sangjani, Pind, Pram, PM Colony, Shahia, Rashid Minhas, AWC Housing, Munirabad, Shafi Chauhan, Brahma, Baba Rakhii, Taxila, Sher Shah Suri, Haru, Nisar Shaheed, Museum, Shah Dir, Haji Shah, Ghorghashiti, Tin Mela, Bagh Nelab, Wisa, PM Housing City, Karpa, Mithial, Graecland, Jhelum Circle, Ajmal Shaheed, Langarpur, Bolani, Kariala, Karkha, Fatehpur, F-6

Machine Mahalla, Jakhar, Dinah, III Rohtas, Chamala, Madukalis, Sohan, New Domeli, Chotala, Khokhran, Gujjar Khan, Matwa, Scheme. I, Pind Mate Khan, Malhal Mughlan, Pinnawal, CS Shah, Jalap River, Katas, Kachhari, Sagarpur, Kot Chaudharyan, Lava, Dharabi, Dhalar, Mugla, Dharmand Feeders, From 08:00 AM to 05:00 PM, Naumanpura. I & III Feeders, GSO Circle, from 09:00 AM to 04:00 PM, Innp, CNC Lab, N Lab.I, O Lab, CNC.I, Pinstitch.II & III, Tamir, New Lab-III, Karpa, Simli Dam, Nilop, Pinstitch Colony, Frash Town, Jhangi Saidan, Taxila, SS Suri, Haru, Bohighar, BOC, HMC.III, R/Poulc, Salar Gah, SSD Wah, Engr University, Ghauri, Nawazsh Shaheed, Nisar Shaheed, Museum, Margalla, HMC Road, HMC II-3, Labor Complex, Bolani, Fatehpur, Kariala Feeders and surrounding areas.



ISLAMABAD: A woman purchasing Christmas related dress at roadside near G-6 area.

Three dacoits busted, arms recovered

ISLAMABAD (APP): Shams Colony Police teams on Friday arrested a three-member gang involved in multiple robbery incidents and recovered six stolen motorbikes, 12 mobile phones, cash, and weapons with ammunition from their possession.

A public relations officer told APP that the arrested suspects, identified as Muhammad Ali, Kamran, and Abdul Rehman, used to book rides through a bike-hailing app and then rob citizens at gunpoint of their motorbikes and cash.

He said during preliminary investigations, the suspects confessed to being involved in several robbery incidents.

DIG Syed Ali Raza appreciated the police team for their efforts in apprehending the gang, stating that Islamabad Police would continue its operations against criminals to ensure the protection of citizens' lives and properties.

He further assured that robust action will be taken against those depriving citizens of their valuable possessions.

Police arrest 27 law breakers

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Police on Friday claimed to have arrested some 27 law breakers involved in different crimes from across the district.

According to a police spokesman, the police, during continued crackdown against drug peddlers, held eight accused on the recovery of more than 9 kilograms of hashish.

The Kahuta Police recovered 2.5 kg hashish from accused Asim, the Cantt Police nabbed Bakhtiar with 2.4 kg hashish and the Bani Police held Arsalan with 1.350 kg hashish. Similarly, the Taxila Police recovered 560 grams hashish from Saqib, while the Wah Saddar Police held Shahzad with 800 grams, Hanifullah with 700 grams, Dawood with 600 grams and Imran with 400 grams of hashish.

ANF recovers over 712 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 11 operations across the country managed to recover over 712 kg drugs worth Rs 120 million and arrested eight accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Friday.

He informed that in an operation, 19 grams ice was recovered from an accused arrested near a university in Attock.

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

3 kg ice was recovered from a passenger going to Jeddah at Karachi International Airport.

In third operation, 970

grams ice was recovered from a parcel booked for New Zealand through a courier office in Islamabad. 199 grams heroin hidden in a ladies bag was recovered from a parcel booked for the UK from a courier office at Lahore Airport.

500 kg hashish hidden in a deserted area of Chaman was recovered.

80.4 kg hashish and 45.6 kg opium were recovered from a vehicle intercepted near a factory in Chunian Bypass, Kasur and an accused was arrested during the operation.

38 kg heroin was recovered from an area near Kuchlak Bypass, Quetta.

In 8th operation, 36 kg

hashish was recovered from secret cavities of a vehicle stopped near Shamkot Motorway Toll Plaza, Khanewal and two accused were arrested.

6 kg hashish was recovered from Darra Adam Khel, Kohat and 1.8 kg hashish was recovered from a vehicle near KKH Road, Mansehra and 2 accused were netted.

In 11th operation, 950 grams ice was recovered from an accused arrested from GT Road, Rawalpindi. Cases have been registered against the arrested accused under the Narcotics Control Act and further investigations are under process.

Under training ANF officers visit Safe City

ISLAMABAD (APP): A delegation of under training Assistant Directors and Inspectors from the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) visited Safe City Islamabad on Friday. Deputy Director technical Safe City welcomed the delegation, a public relations officer told APP.

He said that the delegation visited the command-and-control center, the data hub unit, modern technology-equipped cameras, and the police operations center hall. They were fully briefed about the procedures and advantages of

this project.

Furthermore, the student delegation was informed that Safe City Islamabad is playing a significant role in various departments through modern techniques, including the Police Operations Center, Emergency Control Center, Data Hub Unit, Dispatch Control Center, E-Challan System, and the "Pucar-15" helpline.

The delegation was also apprised of the functionality and benefits of the Safe City cameras in the city. The modern cameras of Safe City are playing a cru-

cial role in ensuring the safety of the city, preventing crimes and safeguarding the lives and property of citizens.

Face recognition cameras have been installed at the entry and exit points of the city which are playing an important role in identifying suspicious elements.

The delegation acknowledged the modern technical system of the Islamabad Police and its benefits. The delegation expressed special gratitude to the Safe City team for this successful visit.

Women Gala starts today

ISLAMABAD (APP): The capital city is all set to witness a grand celebration of women's empowerment and entrepreneurship as the 'Islamabad Women Gala' will kick off on Saturday at the Pak China Friendship Centre. This two-day event, scheduled for December 14-15, promises to be a vibrant and enriching experience, bringing together over 160 women entrepreneurs, artisans, and change-makers from across the country.

The event is being arranged by 'Lets Grow

Together'- a platform for home-based women crafters which is working on self-help basis to facilitate home-based entrepreneurs to establish their businesses. The gala is a big show of women's craftsmanship, featuring an exclusive display of "Made in Pakistan" products, carefully crafted by women. From handmade jewelry and textiles to artisanal food and home decor, the event will showcase the best of Pakistani women's creativity and innovation.

The event aims at pro-

viding a platform for women to showcase their talents, share their stories, and connect with like-minded individuals. The event will feature a wide range of activities, including exhibitions, workshops, kids creative and fun activities, and food arena.

Organized with the theme of women's economic empowerment, the Islamabad Women Gala seeks to promote financial inclusion, entrepreneurship, and skill development among women.

Ban on girls edu indefensible

KABUL (Khaama Press): Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the United States (US) Permanent envoy to the United Nations, says that the ban on girls' education in health institutes is indefensible. Greenfield stated at a United Nations Security Council meeting that the imposition of this ban by the Taliban is unacceptable. She emphasized that the Taliban's restrictions are disrupting humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan.

Displaced families face crisis

HERAT (Amu TV): In the shadow of a worsening economic crisis, internally displaced people in Herat province are contending with unemployment and soaring living costs, leaving many struggling to survive. Among them is Samiullah, who fled Kabul three years ago in search of better opportunities. Now running a modest soup stand in Herat, he finds himself trapped by mounting expenses that his meager income cannot offset.

Closure of 11 higher education institutions by MoHE; concerns, demands and clarifications

KABUL (Pajhwok): Officials and some students of higher education institutions have demanded the decision to close some higher education institutions should be reviewed, but the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), along with an explanation, considered the decision correct, and said that students of these institutions would be introduced to other educational institutions after the exams.

The Ministry of Higher Education said it had revoked the licenses of 11 private higher education institutions in nine provinces of the country due to non-compliance with

academic, teaching, and administrative principles.

The licenses of Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi of Ghazni, Abu Nasr of Farah, Hanzalah and Hekmat of Badghis, Fajristan of Takhar, Nimr of Kunduz, Royan and Quds of Baghlan, Sadat of Balkh, Maulana Jalaluddin Balkhi of Samangan, and Al-Ghayath of Herat higher education institutions have been revoked.

Pajhwok Afghan News has obtained a copy of a report from the MoHE's Academic Affairs Monitoring and Evaluation Department, which explained the reasons for the closure of the 11 higher education

institutions.

The report stated that according to the registered numbers, there should have been a total of 2,498 students in these institutions, but during the ministry's assessment, there were 301 students in all these institutions and approximately 88 percent of the students were absent.

The source added that one out of 69 students was absent in Fajristan, one out of 236 students in Royan, ten out of 121 students in Nimr, none out of 222 students in Quds were present.

The report said that eight out of 588 students in Sadat, 21 out of 90 students in Maulana Jalaluddin

Balkhi, 72 out of 587 students in Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi, ten out of 85 students in Beh Abu Nasr, 37 out of 52 students in Al-Ghayyat, 38 out of 186 students in Hanzala, and 103 out of 262 students in Hekmat were present.

According to the source some other violations such as the lack of attendance, the lack of permanent lecturers, the lack of contracts of some contractual lecturers and the filling of attendance by several people were noticed during the assessment.

Hashim Farnood, head of the Fajristan Institute of Higher Education in Takhar, said that there was a spe-

cific procedure for evaluating private educational institutions, according to which this evaluation should have been conducted.

He said that this procedure stated that in case of violations, the first step is recommendation, then warning, and the final step is fine.

Farnood said: "The ministry says you have imaginary students and imaginary teachers, I say I don't, the ministry has made its own assessment without sharing it with us and has left. It should be assessed by a third party whether I have imaginary students and teachers or not."

Qari Zabihullah

Hajizada, head of the Mawlana Jalaluddin Balkhi Higher Education Institution, said: "This decision is unfair, there was no need for this decision to be made, if any institution is violating rules, there is a procedure to respond to the violations, there are laws, they should have been advised, warned, fined, their work in the ministry should have been suspended, this should have been done in the fifth and sixth stages. I am very sad that a university is operating in a remote province and then such a thing is done to it."

He said a delegation visited the institution two months ago but no report

about violations and wrong doings was shared with them. He hoped the MoHE would review its decision because there was no other university operating in Samangan and he was worried about the future of his students.

However, Ziaullah Hashimi, a spokesman for the Ministry of Higher Education, told Pajhwok Afghan News that the decision to revoke the licenses of universities was not made all at once, and that the evaluation team visited each institution several times and the decision was made after recommendations and warnings.

Enaytullah, a student of

law faculty in the Sultan Mahmood Ghaznavi Higher Education Institution in Ghazni province, said the decision to revoke the incenses of high education institutions left negative impact on students and put them in troubles.

"Now we have to transfer to another institution and it took a long time," he said. But Hashami said that these students were responsible for their decisions, they paid fee but did not attend the classes.

He said as part of cooperation, an examination would be taken from these students and then they would be referred to other institutions.

Afghan women, girls face progressive erasure: Otunbayeva

KABUL (Amu TV): The head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Roza Otunbayeva, warned that Afghan women and girls are facing near-total exclusion from public life, with restrictions worsening under the Taliban's rule.

Speaking at a UN Security Council meeting on Afghanistan, she highlighted that nearly 1,200 days have passed since girls were last allowed access to formal education beyond the sixth grade.

"The Taliban continue to resolutely pursue their vision of an Islamic system and their interpretation of Afghan culture, characterized by unprecedented restrictions on women and girls," Otunbayeva said.

Dire implications of medical education ban

Otunbayeva condemned the Taliban's recent ban on women attending medical institutions, calling it a devastating blow to Afghanistan's healthcare system. "If fully implemented, this

will have deadly implications for women and girls in particular, but also for men, boys, entire communities, and the country as a whole," she said.

She urged the Taliban to reconsider the ban, stressing that it denies Afghans access to a functioning healthcare system.

Otunbayeva also noted that restrictions on women working for NGOs and the United Nations have severely hampered aid efforts. "Stricter segregation of women in business activities has further constrained their livelihoods and mental health, with serious consequences for their families, particularly children," she added.

Broader concerns raised

Participants at the Security Council meeting voiced additional concerns about Afghanistan's security and human rights situation:

US Envoy Linda Thomas-Greenfield denounced the Taliban's policies, calling the medical education

ban "unacceptable and sick." She emphasized that such restrictions disrupt humanitarian aid efforts and reiterated the importance of women's inclusion in international processes like the Doha meetings.

Russian Envoy Vasily Alekseyevich Nebenzya criticized the Taliban's insufficient efforts to counter terrorism. He warned that ISIS fighters are expanding their presence in Afghanistan, escalating tensions, and recruiting foreign fighters. "The threat is growing, and it requires urgent attention," he said.

Chinese Representative echoed concerns about the global security risks posed by terrorist groups in Afghanistan and urged the international community to adopt a unified approach to combating terrorism.

South Korean Envoy expressed alarm over the Taliban's ban on women's medical education, emphasizing that it exacerbates Afghanistan's existing healthcare crisis.

Civil society calls for inclusion

Roya Mahboob, founder of Afghanistan's robotics team, criticized the international community for engaging with the Taliban without including women or civil society representatives.

"I urge you to consider the message you send when you meet with the Taliban in Doha without women and civil society present. You enable them; you enable gender apartheid," Mahboob said.

She stressed that women's rights are integral to human rights. "Without them, there can be neither peace nor security," she said.

Otunbayeva concluded by emphasizing the need for Afghanistan's reintegration into the international community while upholding its international obligations. She called on the global community to ensure that Afghan women and girls are no longer excluded from public life, education, and economic participation.

Oak, juniper wood rates down in Kabul City

KABUL CITY (Pajhwok): The prices of oak and juniper firewood have declined in Kabul City markets after the government allowed its entry to Kabul, firewood sellers said on Thursday.

Fire wood rates surged in capital Kabul after the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) had banned its entry in Kabul for the past one year.

Local residents have been thrilled that ban on the entry of firewood is lifted and the rates of fire woods declined on the eve of winter.

Hewad Zazai, a resident of capital Kabul, said he came to the city to purchase firewood, adding that he burnt oak and juniper wood for heating up his house.

Shujahuddin, another resident of capital Kabul, said his economic condition was not good and so far he did not purchase firewood and waited for the prices to come down.

"Firewood rates have declined, thanks to Allah, there is difference in its prices and I am very happy if there is more decrease in the prices of firewood,"

Gul Mohammad, a resident of Kabul City's 8th Municipality District, said: "I purchased 280 kilograms of firewood, my economic condition is not good and borrowed money from another person, if more firewood are supplied to the city, the prices would further decrease."

Firewood sellers said that for the past one week, the government has allowed those traders who bring firewood — oak and juniper — to Kabul city from Paktia, Khost, Paktika, Nangarhar and Laghman provinces of Afghanistan.

Sayed Moqim Kalakani, a firewood and coal seller, said that roads are opened and the prices have declined now compared to the past week.

"Now 560 kilograms of oak firewood are accounted for 10,000 afs, but earlier the same quantity of oak firewood accounted for 13,000 afs to 14,000 afs, 560 kilograms of juniper firewood are now accounted for 12,000 afs but earlier the same quantity of juniper firewood accounted o 16,000 afs," he said.

He added that the Environment Protection Authority and the Ministry of Agriculture had stopped deforestation and the timber trade, which had also increased the price of timber in the market.

Kalakani said that now the government has allowed traders to import timber to Kabul city, adding that the prices have also decreased.

According to him, in Kabul city, mulberry, walnut and other fruit trees are sold for 6,000 to 5,500 afs, but people do not like them for burning.

Haroon, another firewood seller in Kabul city, said that almond and walnut wood is sold for 6,000 to 6,500 afs, but no one purchase other varieties when oak and juniper wood are available in the market.

Faiq urges Taliban to honor people's demands



KABUL (Khaama Press): Nasseer Ahmad Faiq, Acting Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations, urges Taliban to Respect the Wishes of the People and the International Community.

Faiq, the Acting Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations, called on the Taliban to respect the demands of the Afghan people and the international community. He made this statement during a meeting of the United Nations Security Council on Afghanistan, held on Thursday.

In his speech, Faiq expressed deep concern about the widespread human rights violations in Afghanistan under Taliban rule. He emphasized the need for an end to the Taliban's repressive policies and for the government to respect the will of the people.

"The meeting is being held in the context of Afghanistan's collapsing economy, with millions being forced to flee the country," Mr. Faiq said in his address. He also highlighted that the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan is critical, with 23.7 million people in urgent need of assistance, according to aid organizations.

Faiq warned the United Nations Security Council about the severe consequences of reducing funding for humanitarian aid in Afghanistan.

He stressed that these funds need to be increased to address the growing crisis in the country.

Meanwhile, Rosemary DiCarlo, the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Head of UNAMA, also expressed concerns at the

Security Council regarding the human rights, economic, and security situation in Afghanistan.

The international community, especially the United Nations, must take immediate action to address the worsening humanitarian crisis and human rights violations in Afghanistan.

The Taliban's failure to respect the rights and wishes of the Afghan people continues to undermine any prospects for peace and stability in the region. Without increased support for humanitarian efforts and concrete action to prevent Afghanistan from becoming a hub for terrorism, the country's future remains uncertain.

The international community must remain committed to providing aid and pressure the Taliban to respect human rights and ensure a better future for all Afghans.

Farmers seek viable alternatives to poppy

SAR-I-PUL (Pajhwok):

Some farmers in Sar-i-Pul province have urged the caretaker government to provide them with alternative source of income to replace poppy cultivation.

However, the Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock Department says it has introduced good plans to enhance the agriculture sector in the province.

Abdul Hai, a farmer from Syedabad district, said he had stopped growing poppy since the caretaker government banned the illicit crop in the country, but asked the government to provide them with alternative crops to poppy with good market.

He added: "Poppy cultivation is illegal and puts people's health at risk. I feel happy that poppy cultivation is banned, but I want the caretaker government to introduce an alternative to poppy cultivation for farmers." He pointed out garlic and onions could be good alternatives to poppy, but the market of these crops was not stable and the price fluctuations caused losses to farmers.

Hassan, another farmer from Syedabad district, said: "Farmers earn bread through farming, lack of sufficient water, high prices of fertilizers have forced them to switch to high-value crops and poppy was one of them. But the culti-

vation of poppy has been banned."

He called for introduction of alternative crops that have a good place in the world markets and guarantee the interests of farmers.

Ibrahim, another farmer, mentioned drought, lack of suitable market and weak support of concerned department as main problems being faced by farmers in the province.

He urged the caretaker government to provide farmers with alternative crops to poppy. He added: "We ask the government to introduce a comprehensive agricultural program for farmers as an alternative to poppy cultivation."

Meanwhile, Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock Director Damla Sharifullah Mosadiq said his department has provided training programmes to farmers in areas of improved seeds production, cultivation methods and also distributed wheat seeds to them in order to increase their harvests over the last three years. He added the IEA was aware of the challenges of farmers and their problems will be reduced year by year and the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock has promised farmers many times to improve the farming system and this will be accomplished.

Poppy ban could escalate political tensions

KABUL (TOLONews): US Institute of Peace (USIP) has stated in a report that the Islamic Emirate's ban on poppy cultivation, coupled with the replacement of high-value crops with low-value ones like wheat, could heighten dissatisfaction and escalate political tensions in Afghanistan.

According to the report, while the continuation of the ban demonstrates the power of the Islamic Emirate, it has exacerbated rural poverty and increased landowners' dissatisfaction, which could lead to greater political instability in Afghanistan.

The report stated: "The Taliban's persistence in enforcing the ban has been notable, especially in 2024. If the ban remains in place, it would demonstrate the regime's strength but also worsen rural poverty, increase dissatisfaction among landholders, and spur political instability."

USIP believes that reducing the ban due to pressures and opposition may lead to a resurgence of poppy cultivation, undermining the Islamic Emirate's authority and creating new challenges for the government.

USIP statistics reveal a significant drop in poppy cultivated in Afghanistan in 2024 — from an estimated 22,693 hectares in 2023 to 7,382 hectares in 2024, a drop of 67 percent.

Iranian Envoy: No one, not even Taliban leaders, safe from terrorism



KABUL (Khaama Press): The Iranian Ambassador to the United Nations stated that ISIS is attempting to destabilize Afghanistan and the region.

Ambassador Amir Saeed Iravani, representing the Islamic Republic at the United Nations, addressed the UN Security Council on

Thursday, stating that the security situation in Afghanistan is highly critical.

Iravani referenced the recent death of the Taliban's Minister for Refugees in an explosion, highlighting that no one, including Taliban leaders, is safe from terrorism. He urged the group's leader-

ship to fulfill their commitments and take decisive action against terrorist networks. Iravani also mentioned organized attacks against the Hazara people in Afghanistan, labeling them as instances of extremist violence.

He highlighted the deep humanitarian crises in

Afghanistan, urging the international community to address these issues impartially, without political conditions or bias.

Another key point of Iravani's speech was the presence of Afghan refugees in Iran. He noted that Iran hosts around 6 million Afghan refugees and spends \$10 billion annually to meet their needs.

Iravani criticized the "insufficient" international support for addressing the needs of refugees in Iran, pointing out that both Iran and Pakistan require continued and sustainable assistance.

Ambassador Iravani's remarks underscore the pressing challenges faced by both Afghanistan and its neighboring countries, particularly Iran, in managing the repercussions of ongoing instability in the region.

His calls for international solidarity emphasize the need for a more coordinated and unbiased approach to humanitarian aid.

Asad Qaiser says ‘no talks’ being held with govt

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) senior leader Asad Qaiser clarified on Friday that his party is not engaged in any talks with the government, dismissing reports suggesting that dialogue might have kicked started.

In his speech at the National Assembly, Qaiser said: "I visited Speaker Ayaz Sadiq's residence for condolences. No discussion regarding negotiations took place with the [NA] speaker." Citing media reports that he spoke to the NA speaker about talks between the government and his party, Qaiser clarified that they are "absolutely wrong".

He admitted that although a committee has been formed for talks, the committee when it thinks is right and the government shows some seriousness, then they will take directions from Khan for further action. The PTI leader and Sadiq had agreed to ease political tensions. The two leaders discussed the importance of reducing polarisation and finding common ground for the greater national interest, the well-placed sources added.

While the party has not announced taking to the streets once again, it has said that it will begin a civil disobedience movement later this month if the government does not accept its demands, including the repeal of the 26th Constitutional Amendment. Qaiser raised serious concerns about the November 26 protest, questioning: "Why was live ammunition used during the protest? Under which law were unarmed citizens fired upon?"

He strongly condemned the actions and demanded accountability for the events of that day. "We consider this new law to be unconstitutional," he said of the 26th Amendment. Calling for justice, he demanded that the PTI founder should be released immediately, and the events of November 26 must be thoroughly investigated.

Qaiser expressed admiration for Punjab's MNAs, saying: "I salute the MNAs from Punjab who are standing firm against state oppression." He alleged that martial law was effectively in place in Punjab, saying: "In Punjab, martial law is practically in effect, and there is no protection for people's businesses or properties."

Imran, Bushra among PTI leaders booked

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Incarcerated Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan, his wife Bushra Bibi, and other party's top leaders on Friday were booked in a "triple murder case" involving three Rangers personnel who died during the opposition party's "do-or-die" protest last month.

A first information report (FIR) was lodged at Islamabad's Ramna Police Station, stating that the incident occurred in accordance with a "plan orchestrated at Adiala Jail" — where former premier Imran Khan is incarcerated for more than one year. It added that the martyrdom of the paramilitary personnel took place "at the behest of the PTI founder" and "some inmates and employees of the jail's undercover police are witnesses of the plan".

PTI central leaders including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, Opposition Leader in the National Assembly Omar Ayub Khan, Sheikh Waqas Akram, Salman Akram Raja, Murad Saeed, Zulfi Bukhari, Raouf Hasan, Hammad Azhar, and others were also among nominated persons in the case. The FIR stated that Bushra and other accused had incited the people for mutiny against the armed forces and the government via a video message which led to the unfortunate incident.

It added that a vehicle driven by an unidentified individual rammed into three Rangers personnel performing security duties at the PTI protest. The PTI top leadership was booked in the murder case under terrorism and 10 sections of Pakistan Penal Code. The former ruling party's much-hyped protest in Islamabad, aimed at securing the PTI founder's release, had culminated in the party's hasty retreat after the government's midnight crackdown on the protesters.

Today's development came after the PTI and coalition government traded blames for the violence during the much-hyped protest which saw fierce clashes erupted between the law enforcers and the protesters. The former ruling party has since claimed that at least 12 of its workers were killed and 1,000 were arrested. However, the government has categorically denied using live ammunition against the protesters and said that four law enforcers including three Rangers personnel and a policeman were martyred during the protest.

‘Minus Imran’ dialogue will not be accepted: Hamid Raza

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Sunni Ittehad Council Chairman Sahibzada Hamid Raza said that 'minus Imran' dialogue wouldn't be accepted at all. He was talking to media outside the Parliament House on Friday. "The guidelines to hold political dialogue would only be given by Imran Khan," he said.

He added that negotiations with the government haven't started yet but there is a discussion within the party in this regard. Meanwhile, Senator Ali Zafar said that PTI isn't begging to hold talks. "There is an impression that PTI is begging to hold negotiations. It is completely wrong impression," he said. He added that PTI opened the doors for political talks on two conditions. "We want release of our party workers languishing in different jails and judicial commission to probe what happened on Nov 24," said Barrister Ali Zafar.

Addressing the speaker, he said: "As Speaker, it is your responsibility to ensure the protection of this House's members."

The National Assembly was also informed that the government has taken a number of initiatives to reduce the burden of electricity prices on consumers.

Parliamentary Secretary for Power Division Aamir, Talal Khan told the House during the Question Hour that the initiatives include negotiations with the Independent Power Producers (IPPs). He mentioned the termination of contracts with five IPPs, emphasizing that the process with other IPPs is continuing. Responding to a Calling Attention Notice in the House, Minister for Petroleum Musadik Masood Malik said a tender has been floated for an additional LNG cargo in January, considering the high demand for gas next month.

However, he mentioned that the LNG, currently being purchased under the term contract, is in surplus in the country. The Minister said five LNG cargoes from Qatar, which were to be procured this year, will now be purchased next year. Additionally, he said that negotiations are underway with a company for the deferment of five LNG cargoes next year.

Federal Parliamentary Secretary for Human Rights, Saba Sadiq, said the provision of the best facilities to the senior citizens was the priority of the government and a comprehensive policy would be introduced soon. Replying to a supplementary question

of the PPP member Agha Syed Rafiullah during the Question Hour, she informed the National Assembly that the rules for the implementation of the Senior Citizens Act were being finalized, and would be presented for approval in the next meeting of the federal cabinet.

Saba added that a Council had also been formed which would present its recommendation to the federal cabinet meeting in the next week. Earlier, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah suspended the House's proceedings due to the absence of ministers during the question hour.

The Deputy Speaker expressed his displeasure over the matter and said that he had written a letter to the Prime Minister, conveying the House's displeasure regarding the ministers' non-attendance. "The letter has been delivered to the Prime Minister's Office, expressing the House's displeasure at the ministers' absence during proceedings. We will not allow the House to function in this manner," the Deputy Speaker said.

Announcing a short break, he added, "We will take a 10-minute recess. If the ministers do not attend the session, we will adjourn the proceedings of the House." The National Assembly also offered fatiha for the departed soul of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf member Shehryar Afridi's sister. Ali Muhammad Khan led the prayer after the beginning of the session, following the recitation of the Holy Quran and Naat, at the request of Deputy Speaker.

Pakistan, Tajikistan agree to further promote ties

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Tajikistan on Friday agreed to further promote cooperation in sectors such as communication, particularly land-based connectivity, energy, education, and agriculture. The understanding was reached during a meeting between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Energy Minister of Tajikistan Daler Jumma who called on him at the PM House.

Regional connectivity projects, including CASA-1000, were also discussed in the meeting. Daler Jumma is visiting Pakistan to participate in the Pakistan-Tajikistan Joint Commission. The prime

minister welcomed Daler Jumma to Pakistan and expressed satisfaction with the progress made in bilateral cooperation between the two countries in various sectors during the Joint Commission.

Recalling his visit to Tajikistan and his recent meetings with Tajik President Emomali Rahmon in Riyadh and Baku, the prime minister extended his best wishes to the Tajik President and expressed hope that President Rahmon would visit Pakistan soon. He expressed satisfaction with the memorandums of understanding (MOUs) and agreements reached during his visit and emphasized that timely implementation

of these agreements would further strengthen bilateral relations.

The Tajik Minister thanked the Prime Minister for the warm welcome and hospitality and emphasized the importance of enhancing relations and cooperation between the two countries. The meeting was also attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Minister for investment and communication Abdul Aleem Khan, Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema, Minister for Energy Awais Ahmed Leghari, Minister for Petroleum Musadik Malik, Advisor to the PM Tariq Fatemi and relevant government officials.

China eyes talks as Trump warns new tariffs

BEIJING (AFP): As Donald Trump steps up his tariff threats against China, Beijing is moving to beat the next US president to the punch with its own restrictions and get Washington to the negotiating table ahead of a full-blown trade war, analysts say.

Armed with the lessons of the last trade war during Trump's first term, China is seeking to amass bargaining chips to kick off talks with a new US administration on contentious aspects of bilateral ties, including trade and investment, and science and technology. It is also concerned about the harmful effects of additional tariffs on its already fragile economy.

This week, China launched a probe into US chip giant Nvidia over what it claimed were suspected antitrust violations, which follows its ban on US-bound exports of rare minerals. "We have to look at this as the opening bid in what will likely ultimately turn into a negotiation with the US rather than just an imposition of tariffs and everyone walks away," HSBC's Chief Asia Economist Fred Neumann said.

China is better prepared to deal with almost any tariffs, short of an "Armageddon announcement" of a 60 per cent tariff on all Chinese goods, said George Magnus, research associate at Oxford University's China Centre. The world's second-largest economy now globally dominates sectors such as electric vehicles and green energy and has less need for the Boeing jets and large gaso-

line-fuelled cars it bought back in 2017, having found substitutes such as Airbus aeroplanes and its own Comac C919.

But China is far from self-sufficient. A new trade war with the world's biggest economy would still hurt China more, analysts say, as Washington can levy ever-larger import duties on its goods and further rip China from its supply chains. China still needs to import strategic materials from the US such as advanced microchips and other high-tech equipment and counts on US consumers to buy its goods, given an increasingly pessimistic global trade outlook and weak domestic consumer demand. Beijing wants to sit down with Trump before he places more curbs on US high-tech exports and to secure the renewal of the US-China Science and Technology Agreement, said Alicia Garcia-Herrero, chief economist for the Asia Pacific at Natixis.

The agreement, which enables scientific collaboration between the two countries, lapsed in August and negotiations over its renewal are unlikely to be completed before Trump's January 20 inauguration. While China's Huawei has heavily invested in its advanced chip-making capabilities, their commercial viability remains unclear, she added, incentivising China's negotiators to sit down with their US counterparts to strike a deal ensuring a steady supply of American-made chips.

Beijing took two years before it agreed to buy an extra \$200 billion in American goods and serv-

ices, per the terms of the "Phase One" agreement which ended the first trade war. This time, China has new carrots to dangle, such as increasing purchases of oil and liquefied natural gas, as the US is currently pumping out more than it can consume. "Trump bragged on the campaign trail: 'Drill baby, drill,' so [he] will need the demand support," said Bo Zhengyuan, a Shanghai-based partner at consultancy Plenum.

Given the increasing restrictions on the export of chips, agricultural goods, commodities and energy are among the items the US can still sell to China. Bo said. China's commerce ministry said it was open to engaging and communicating with the economic and trade teams of the Trump administration when asked for comment. But Beijing also has sticks to beat Washington with, if the US side feels China's failure to meet its previous purchase commitments means it will gain more from tariffs than talks. US firms are already feeling the squeeze, said Michael Hart, president of the American Chamber of Commerce in China.

"US companies and other foreign companies have really been concerned about whether they actually have access to this market," Hart said. "Can we even sell into China anymore? Is there an outright ban on us?" Business sentiment among US firms in China is at its lowest since 1999, according to a September survey by the American Chamber's Shanghai chapter.



GAZA: Palestinians praying at the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir el-Balah over the bodies of victims of an Israeli air strike on the Nuseirat refugee camp.

OGDCL announces gas, condensate discovery

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL), Pakistan's leading exploration and production company, on Friday announced a significant gas and condensate discovery in the Samanasuk Formation, an exploratory zone, at the Bettani-02 (Slant) well located in the Laki Marwat district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. OGDCL is the operator of the Wali Exploration License with a 100% working interest.

The Bettani-02 (Slant) well was spudded as an appraisal effort and drilled to a depth of 5,080 meters into the Shinawari Formation. Subsequent testing of the well, using the Cased Hole Drill Stem Test (DST-1), revealed a flow rate of 2.14 Million Standard Cubic Feet per Day (MMSCFD) of gas and 74 barrels of condensate per day (BCPD) on a 32/64" choke, with a well-head flowing pressure of 435 psi.

This marks the first-ever hydrocarbon discovery in the Samanasuk formation within the Wali Exploration License. It has further extended the hydrocarbon play area in the southwest-ern part of the Bannu Basin and de-risked the exploration potential of deeper reservoirs in the region. OGDCL has already designed a comprehensive exploration program to further enhance energy self-reliance in the country.

The discovery marks an important step in unlocking the energy potential of the region. By successfully de-risking exploration in the deeper reservoirs of the Bannu Basin, OGDCL has paved the way for further hydrocarbon exploration, crucial for addressing Pakistan's growing energy needs.

‘Imperative’ to work against Daesh: Blinken

ANKARA (AFP): US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Friday told Turkiye it was "imperative" to work against a resurgence of Daesh in Syria following the fall of Bashar Assad. The top US diplomat also said he saw "encouraging signs" on reaching a ceasefire in the war-torn Gaza Strip.

His remarks came on the second leg of a whirlwind regional tour following Bashar Assad's ouster in a lightning offensive spear-headed by Islamist-led HTS militants, ending five decades of repressive rule by his clan. He flew to Turkiye on Thursday evening where he met for more than an hour with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan at Ankara airport, a US official said.

"Our country worked very hard and gave a lot over many years to ensure the elimination of the territorial caliphate of Daesh, to ensure that threat doesn't rear its head again," Blinken said. "And it's imperative we keep at those efforts." In response, Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan told Blinken Turkiye was committed to ensuring stability in Syria "as soon as possible" and "preventing Daesh" militants from gaining a foothold there. On Thursday, Erdogan assured Blinken Turkiye would never ease up in the fight against Daesh in Syria, despite its operations against Kurdish fighters seen as key to containing the extremists.

Action against illegal mining activities directed

F.P. Report

ABBOTTABAD: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, on Friday paid an official visit to the divisional headquarter Abbottabad, where he presided over a joint meeting of officials from all districts of the Hazara Division at the Commissioner's Office. The four-hour-long meeting provided a comprehensive review of administrative matters and public service delivery in the region.

Senior officials briefed the Chief Minister on the division's performance across key sectors, including health, education, water supply, local government, social welfare, and revenue services. The meeting was attended by Provincial Assembly Speaker Babar Saleem Swati, cabinet members, MNAs and MPAs from Hazara Division, Commissioner Hazara, and district administration officials.

The Chief Minister expressed dissatisfaction with the Ayub Teaching Hospital, where 90 out of 100 specialist positions remain vacant. He directed officials to fill these vacancies on a contract basis within two months, warning that failure to meet this deadline would result in the removal of responsible officers.

Additionally, he instructed authorities to address vacant positions in other public hospitals on a priority basis and ensure 100% supply of medicines to healthcare centers. The



Chief Minister emphasized the need to strengthen primary healthcare facilities by providing necessary staff and equipment immediately.

Urging citizens and public representatives to report absentee doctors and teachers, the Chief Minister promised strict action against negligent government employees without exception or influence. "We must move beyond the culture of favoritism and restore public trust in government systems through merit-based practices," he remarked.

The Chief Minister ordered the immediate end of teachers posting on deputation, further directing the quarters concerned to ensure functional washrooms and access to clean drinking water in all government girls' schools.

In an effort to curb misuse of state land, the Chief Minister instructed Deputy Commissioners and district officials to compile complete data on government-owned lands within 15 days. He warned that any unreported land identified later by the provincial government would result in strict action against the concerned officials. The Chief Minister also directed

authorities to expedite the digitization of land records across the Hazara Division.

The Chief Minister directed the concerned authorities to take strict action against illegal mining activities in the Hazara Division. He ordered the immediate closure of illegal crushing plants and instructed officials to submit complete data on all mining leases in the division to the provincial government for review and appropriate decisions. Furthermore, he emphasized that mining operations near residential areas should be halted.

Similarly, the Chief Minister directed the Department of Tourism to focus on promoting tourism in the region by developing new tourist spots along modern lines. He instructed the preparation and submission of PC-Is for all new tourism projects.

The Chief Minister emphasized the need for the timely completion of ongoing development projects, and directed the concerned authorities to prioritize the completion of these projects, avoid unnecessary delays, and ensure their timely execution without compromising on the quality of work.

Removal of plans from ADP: PHC seeks response

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Syed Arshad Ali and Justice Waqar Ahmad has issued a notice to the provincial government, seeking a response within 14 days on the removal of development projects from the Annual Development Program (ADP) 2024/25, on Friday.

The projects were approved during the tenure of former Chief Minister Mahmood Khan. The counsel Sultan Muhammad Khan advocate argued that the provincial government had dropped 25 approved development projects for Swat from the ADP 2024/25, which is a violation of the rights of the people of Swat and has caused them irreparable developmental losses.

PHC has directed the provincial government to respond within 14 days, explaining the reasons behind the removal of the development projects from the ADP 2024/25 and adjourned further hearing.

PHC grants bail to PTI MNA Mubeen Jutt: The Peshawar High Court has granted protective bail to Mubeen Arif Jutt till 17th December and ordered to appear before the court.

the provincial government has now removed these projects from the ADP 2024/25, which has halted the development work in Swat.

The court inquired about the authority behind the removal of the projects, to which the lawyer replied that they also want to know who was behind this decision. The lawyer argued that the removal of the projects from the ADP 2024/25 is a violation of the rights of the people of Swat and has caused them irreparable developmental losses.

PHC has directed the provincial government to respond within 14 days, explaining the reasons behind the removal of the development projects from the ADP 2024/25 and adjourned further hearing.

PHC grants bail to PTI MNA Mubeen Jutt: The Peshawar High Court has granted protective bail to Mubeen Arif Jutt till 17th December and ordered to appear before the court.

National Assembly (MNA) Mubeen Arif Jutt, restraining the relevant authorities from arresting him.

A two-member bench of the Peshawar High Court, comprising Justice Syed Arshad Ali and Justice Waqar Ahmad, heard the petition filed by Mubeen Arif Jutt's wife. The petitioners' lawyer, Alam Khan Adeenzai, appeared before the court and argued that Mubeen Arif Jutt is an MNA from Gujranwala and is currently in Dubai. He is scheduled to return to Pakistan on December 16 and will land at Peshawar Airport, where there is a risk of his arrest.

The lawyer requested the court to grant protective bail to Mubeen Arif Jutt, enabling him to appear before the court without fear of arrest. PHC accepted the petition and granted protective bail to Mubeen Arif Jutt till 17th December and ordered to appear before the court.

Russian missiles batter Kyiv’s embattled power grid

KYIV (Reuters): Russia hammered Ukrainian energy facilities in a massive aerial attack on Friday that President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said was one of the largest yet on the ailing grid and evidence of why Kyiv needed more Western support before any peace with Russia.

Russia's 12th major assault on the energy system this year damaged power facilities in several Ukrainian regions and forced authorities to impose even longer electricity cuts for millions of civilians, the national grid operator said.

With winter temperatures currently around -6 degrees Celsius, the strikes increase pressure on Ukraine at an unpredictable moment with Donald Trump set to return to the White House next month, vowing to end the war quickly. "This is (Russian President Vladimir) Putin's plan for 'peace' – to destroy everything. This is how he wants 'negotiations' – terrorising millions of people," Zelenskyy said on X. "A strong reaction from the world is needed: a massive strike – a massive reaction."

Russia launched 93 missiles, including one manufactured in North Korea, and nearly 200 drones during the attack, Zelenskyy said. Air defences intercepted 81 of the missiles, including 11 shot down by F-16 fighter jets, he added. The full extent of the damage was hard to assess. After repeated Russian attacks, officials reveal little detailed information about the state of the network. Six unspecified energy facilities were damaged in the western region of Lviv that borders Poland, officials said.