

CJP summons JCP meeting
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Yahya Afridi has summoned a meeting of the Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP) tomorrow on Saturday December 21 to review the proposed draft of JC Rules for appointment of judges. A committee headed by Justice Jamal Mandokhail had forwarded the draft to Judicial Commission for consideration.

Another polio case reported
F.P. Report

HYDERABAD: One more case of polio virus has been confirmed in Sindh after mobile vaccination teams found a patient in Jacobabad during the last anti-polio campaign of the ongoing year, bringing the total number of patients reported from across the country this year to 64. This is the fourth case of the virus reported from the city this year.



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PM calls for global action on Gaza, Lebanon

— says youth, SMEs, key drivers of economic development

CAIRO (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday tabled strong condemnation of Israel's ongoing military actions in Gaza, Lebanon, the West Bank, and Syria, urging the international community to take decisive steps towards ending the violence and ensuring justice for the unabated conflict-affected populations.

The prime minister made the call during a special session at the 11th D-8 Summit in Cairo, convened by Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi. In his address, the prime minister emphasized the grave humanitarian crisis unfolding in Gaza, describing it as "one of the darkest chapters of modern history."

He condemned Israel's actions, labeling them as blatant violations of international law, United Nations resolutions, and directives from the International Court of Justice (ICJ). "History will bear witness to these pages tainted in the blood of innocents," he stated, underscoring the

global responsibility to address the atrocities.

The prime minister also expressed strong support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), which has been providing vital aid to Palestinian civilians amidst the chaos. He condemned Israel's attempts to demonize the organization, recognizing it as the only lifeline for millions of displaced and suffering people in Gaza and the West Bank.

"As the violence continues to spread, threatening to destabilize the wider region, Pakistan's stance remains firm on the need for a just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. A viable, sovereign, and contiguous State of Palestine based on pre-1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, is the only path to enduring peace," said PM Shehbaz. He reiterated Pakistan's unwavering support for all international mediation efforts aimed at achieving a ceasefire. He said, "We deeply appreciate the efforts of the State of

Qatar and Egypt in this regard."

PM Shehbaz Sharif highlighted the urgent need for humanitarian relief, with a focus on rebuilding the devastated regions. "Pakistan, alongside other nations, has already sent essential relief goods to Palestine, entering through Egypt and Jordan. However, such efforts must be sustained to support the ongoing needs of millions of displaced families, particularly vulnerable women and children, who face extreme hardship during the harsh winter months," he said.

The prime minister called on the global community to unite in the face of these atrocities, stressing, "the echoes and shrills of the innocent people of Gaza demand collective action to end the cycle of violence and liberation from what is called Israel's barbaric military and political dominance." The prime minister urged all nations to listen to the cries of the innocent thousands of orphans, widows, hapless and destitute children who have lost their limbs, family

members and loved ones and act swiftly to bring an end to this "prolonged historic catastrophe." The world, he insisted, must respond now, for the future of Gaza, Lebanon, and the broader Middle East hangs in the balance. Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, underscoring vital role of youth and small and medium enterprises (SMEs), said that robust economies could be built by investing in both key drivers of the economic development.

He said for Pakistan, investing in youth, and supporting SMEs, was crucial for the country's socio-economic development, and progress. "With over 60% of our population under the age of 30, we possess, fountain of potential, for innovation and growth," he said while addressing the D-8 Summit in Cairo. The prime minister highlighted that unlocking this potential required provision of the right skills, opportunities and financial resources.

Similarly, he said through the flag-

ship Youth Programme, his government was committed to providing quality education, creating jobs, and offering productive opportunities. Since 2013, he said this programme under the leadership of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif had distributed over 6,00,000 laptops to high achievers, awarded hundreds and thousands of scholarships, and trained a huge cohort of individuals in demand-driven skills such as artificial intelligence, data analytics, and cyber security.

"Pakistan is home to one of the largest freelance communities in the world. We are focusing on IT trainings at a mass scale to equip our youth with the necessary tools to connect with the digital world and capitalize on those opportunities with the aim to enable jobs-seekers become job-creators," he remarked. Furthermore, he also talked about the government's Youth Business and Agriculture, Loan Scheme under which billions in loans had been disbursed, enabling, young Pakistanis, to start and scale their own

businesses.

"Additionally, our initiatives, such as, Start-up Pakistan and the National Innovation Award aim to foster, recognize, and, promote a promising, start-up ecosystem, providing mentorship, and funding incubation opportunities for innovative, tech-driven ideas," he added. Reflecting on Summit's theme, "Investing in Youth and Supporting Small and Medium Enterprises," the prime minister stressed its relevance in building resilient economies and creating opportunities for sustainable development across member states.

He outlined that for D-8 member-states, empowering youth and entrepreneurship, presented an opportunity, to harness the power of young population, and create environments, where small businesses, could thrive. The prime minister congratulated the Egyptian government, and its leadership, on hosting, the D-8 Summit - an important platform, or development cooperation, between like-minded countries.



CAIRO: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif shaking hands with Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan during meeting.

Pakistan, Turkish, Iran, Bangladesh, Indonesia leaders discuss bilateral ties

CAIRO (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif held a bilateral meeting with the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on the sidelines of 11th D-8 Summit here on Thursday and discussed bilateral ties and matters of mutual interest. The prime minister underscored that the historic, fraternal and multi-dimensional relations between Pakistan and Turkiye are without parallel and have withstood the test of time.

He noted with deep appreciation tremendous strides made by Turkiye under President Erdogan's leadership. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif emphasized that the two countries should increase economic cooperation in new areas for foreign investment and joint ventures, particularly in IT, agriculture and green technology.

The two leaders held wide-ranging talks and discussed further strengthening of bilateral relations, particularly boosting economic ties to achieve the bilateral trade target of US\$ 5 billion set by the two leaders. They agreed to continue to work together for further deepening economic, trade, and defense cooperation.

Prime Minister also held a bilateral meeting with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on the sidelines of the 11th D-8 Summit here on Thursday. Both leaders hoped that the decisions taken at the D-8 Summit would pave the way for enhanced cooperation among D-8 member states in mutually beneficial areas.

Both leaders expressed resolve to further strengthen Pakistan-Iran fraternal ties in all areas of mutual interest, particularly trade and economy, energy, security and regional connectivity. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif emphasized on utilizing the vast scope in bilateral trade and economic cooperation by identifying

new sectors through various existing institutional mechanisms.

In order to develop and improve livelihood of border regions, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif stressed on the importance to operationalize border markets, which have already been inaugurated and work on the inauguration of remaining markets. The two leaders also highlighted the mutual support extended by the two countries on each other's core issues and reaffirmed commitment to remain closely engaged on all matters of regional and global significance.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also held a bilateral meeting with the Chief Adviser of Bangladesh Professor Dr. Muhammad Yunus and emphasized the need to make joint efforts to explore new avenues of economic cooperation.

In the meeting held on the sidelines of the D-8 Summit here, the prime minister stressed taking advantage of great potential to boost trade in different sectors including chemicals, cement clinkers, surgical goods, leather goods and IT.

The meeting took place in a cordial environment, truly reflecting the existing goodwill and fraternal ties between Pakistan and Bangladesh, according to a PM Office press release. Prime Minister Shehbaz highlighted the historical, religious and cultural linkages between the two countries. He expressed Pakistan's keen desire to enhance bilateral cooperation, particularly in the areas of trade, people-to-people contacts and cultural exchanges.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also held a meeting with President of Indonesia Prabowo Subianto wherein the two sides agreed to remain in close contact to maintain the momen-

tum in bilateral relations with particular emphasis on further deepening economic and commercial ties.

In the meeting held on the sidelines D-8 Summit here, both leaders noted the importance of regular high-level interaction between the two countries, according to a PM Office press release.

Prime Minister Shehbaz congratulated Prabowo on assuming the office of the President and exchanged views on a wide range of issues of mutual interest including bilateral ties covering political, trade and economic matters, as well as cooperation at the multilateral fora.

He noted that Indonesia was a reliable trade partner of Pakistan, particularly as a palm oil supplier, as Pakistan relies on imports to meet its vegetable oil needs.

Emphasizing Pakistan's deep interest in engaging with ASEAN and its members, the prime minister said that Pakistan appreciated Indonesia's support in achieving Sectoral Partner Status in ASEAN and membership of ASEAN Regional Forum. With Indonesia's support, Pakistan looks forward to becoming a Full Dialogue Partner of ASEAN, he added.

Prime Minister Shehbaz also extended an invitation to President Prabowo Subianto to visit Pakistan at his early convenience which the latter accepted. Both the leaders reaffirmed their unwavering support for the Palestinian cause and called for a ceasefire in Gaza urging for a comprehensive approach for resolution of the Palestinian issue with the establishment of a sovereign and independent State of Palestine, with pre-1967 borders and Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Food supplies to Kurram

KP CM takes action

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, has taken immediate action to address the need for food supplies in Kurram District.

The Chief Minister has decided to provide wheat to the people of Kurram at subsidized rates and directed the Food department and district administration to take immediate steps in this regard. As per the decision, wheat will be supplied directly to the people at subsidized rates from the government warehouse in Kurram. In the previous provincial cabinet meeting, it was decided to supply wheat to the flour mills in Kurram. However, due to the unavailability of POL (petroleum, oil, and lubricants), the flour mills were unable to grind wheat. The Deputy Commissioner Kurram requested the provincial government to directly supply wheat to the citizens instead of the flour mills.

Considering the immediate needs of the people, the Chief Minister decided to provide wheat directly to the citizens instead of the mills. Government wheat will be supplied to the people at a subsidized rate of Rs. 2,800 per 40 kilograms.

The Chief Minister expressed his deep concern over the hardships faced by the people of Kurram due to the tense situation in the area. He assured that all available resources will be being utilized to ensure the provision of food, healthcare, and other basic necessities to the people of Kurram.

Meanwhile, on the special instructions of the Chief Minister, the provincial government has continued the supply of medicines to Kurram via the MI-17 helicopter. On Thursday, two consignments of medicines were delivered to Satta. The 3,600-kilogram shipment included emergency medicines as well as essential vaccines.

Meanwhile, Advisor for Health, Ittisham Ali, announced that in light of the recent problems, another

KP Apex Committee to meet today

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, has convened a meeting of the Provincial Apex Committee today (Friday) to address the situation in Kurram District. The meeting will comprehensively review the latest law and order situation in Kurram, the provincial government's measures to restore peace, and other related matters.

The meeting of the Apex Committee will be chaired by the Chief Minister at the Chief Minister's Secretariat. Senior civil and military leadership, relevant members of the provincial cabinet, and officials from the concerned divisional and district administration will participate.

Important decisions will be made during the meeting to ensure the provision of commodities and other essential items to the people of Kurram and to establish peace in the region. The forum will also determine a future course of action for achieving sustainable peace in the area through consultations with all relevant stakeholders. Additionally, the meeting will be briefed on the progress made so far by the Grand Jirga formed by the provincial government to restore peace in the region.

shipment of emergency medicines has been successfully delivered to Lower Kurram on Thursday.

He stated that two MI-17 helicopter flights transported 3,600 kilograms of medicines worth Rs5.4 million to Satta. The consignment has been handed over to the Medical Superintendent of THQ Satta. These medicines could not be delivered yesterday due to adverse weather conditions.

Gandapur, Qureshi among 14 PTI leaders indicted

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: An Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) has indicted PTI leaders Shah Mahmood Qureshi and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, along with 12 other accused, in the GHQ attack case.

During the hearing, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur appeared in court, and the judge canceled his arrest warrants. PTI leader Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Shibli Faraz, and several other accused were also present. The court indicted 14 individuals, including Gandapur, and adjourned the case until December 21.

The accused denied the charges. Among those indicted were Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Shehryar Afridi, retired Colonel Shabbir Awan, Latif Satti, Umar Tanveer Butt, Shibli Faraz, and Kanwal Shozeb.

Additionally, Taimoor Masood, Saad Ali Khan, Sikandar Zaib, Zohaib Afridi, Fahad Masood, and Raja Nasir Mehmood were also indicted. To date, 113 individuals have been indicted in the GHQ attack case. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister, Shehryar Afridi, and Kanwal Shozeb filed applications under Section 265-D, which the ATC has scheduled for hearing today. The chief minister appointed lawyer Ghulam Hussain Sanbal as his 12th pleader and thanked the judge for canceling the arrest warrants.

As uncertainty surrounding the initiation of talks between embattled Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and the incumbent government, party's incarcerated senior leader Shah Mahmood Qureshi has called for holding dialogue instead of "confrontation", saying that the issues should be resolved through "mutual consensus". "Pakistan needs political stability at this time...political stability is vital for economic stability," the former foreign minister said while speaking to journalists in Adiala Jail on Thursday.

National Assembly session PPP stages protest over absence of ministers

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has staged protest in National Assembly over the absence of federal ministers after parliamentary secretaries fail to satisfy lawmakers during question session.

During the session, which started under the chairmanship of Deputy Speaker Syed Mir Ghulam Mustafa Shah on Thursday, PPP parliamentary leader MNA Naveed Qamar expressed dissatisfaction with the response of the parliamentary secretaries and the absence of ministers.

PPP leader said that it seemed government had given federal ministers free hand and they do not need to come in the house, moreover, parliamentary secretaries were not being properly briefed. Speaker told PPP leader that letter was being written to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his concerned were being shared with the PM.

PPP leader Naveed Qamar talking about PIA privatization said there was an attempt to privatize PIA once again and earlier such talks had failed. He questioned that government was privatizing PIA again. Is there a time frame? Have you thought how to improve the process? Law Minister Azam Nazir Tarar told the House said that it is good news that "our routes to Europe have been restored, now it is considered that the bids for PIA will be better".

During the question session, PPP MNA Sharmila Farooq said that there was a shortfall of 60 billion rupees in the Higher Education

Commission budget. MNA Rai Hassan said that during PTI government huge work was done for launching of unified syllabus country wide.

Education Parliamentary Secretary Farah Naz Akbar said though education is a provincial matter but federal government was working on it. She claimed a lot of work has been done for it, she admitted that it is very important to have the same syllabus.

Parliamentary Secretary for Commerce Zulfiqar Bhatti said that the government has achieved 13 percent growth in exports, we have started formulating e-commerce policy again and digital technology was being used in it. Later NA session was adjourned for an indefinite period.

The National Assembly was also informed that the reports of substantial decrease in the education budget for the current fiscal year are incorrect.

Responding to a question during Question Hour today, Parliamentary Secretary for Federal Education and Professional Training Farah Naz Akbar said the non-development budget has been increased by 13 percent and development budget by 69.79 percent. She said the allocation for Islamabad Model Education Institutions has been increased by 27.56 percent.

Responding to another question, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Azam Nazeer Tarar said the bidding process for the privatization of the Pakistan International Airlines will be launched afresh and better bids are expected.

FO terms US sanctions on entities as biased

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has termed the US decision to impose sanctions on National Development Complex and three commercial entities as unfortunate and biased.

In a statement, Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said Pakistan's strategic capabilities are meant to defend its sovereignty and preserve peace and stability in South Asia. She said the latest installment of sanctions defies the objective of peace and security by aiming to accentuate military asymmetries. She added that such policies have dangerous implications for strategic stability of our region and beyond.

The Spokesperson said Pakistan's strategic programme is a sacred trust bestowed by 240 million people upon its leadership. The sanctity of this trust, held in the highest esteem across the entire political spectrum, cannot be compromised.

Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said we also regret the imposition of sanctions on private commercial entities. Similar listings of commercial entities in the past were based on mere doubts and suspicion without any evidence whatsoever. She said strict adherence to non-proliferation norms, licensing requirement for advanced military technology to other countries have been waived off in the past. The Spokesperson said such double standards and discriminatory practices not only undermine the credibility of non-proliferation regimes, but also endanger regional and international peace and security.

KP govt hold responsible for Kurram issue

Maintenance of law and order prime responsibility of KP govt: Senate told

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Chauhdry Salik Hussain on Thursday informed the Senate that maintenance of law and order is the prime responsibility of the provincial government in Khurram District under the constitution.

Responding to a Calling Attention Notice raised by Raja Nasir Abbas about the deteriorating law and order situation of Parachinar, District Kurram, resulting into loss of lives and shortage of medicines and food items due to closure of main Peshawar-Parachinar road leading to humanitarian crisis in the area, the minister said that Federal government has already offered complete assistance to the provincial government in this regard.

He said that the governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa who is representative of the federal government had also convened a Jirga to sort out the issue but the Chief Minister did not bother to participate in it. He went on to say that the politics should be set aside while dealing such grave issues. Earlier, raising the notice, Raja Nasir Abbas said that hundreds of thousands innocent people have been killed in Khurram so far 99 percent of the people do not want to fight each other, he added. He said some anti-social elements want to pitch both Suni and Shia sects each other for their

divide and rule policy. Coming hard on the provincial government, he said that the KP government appointed an incompetent person as a spokesperson who doesn't know about peace and security.

He said that a committee of the House should also be constituted to look into this grave issue. He also called upon the central, provincial governments and the interior minister to take notice of the matter and take concrete steps for reopening of the road immediately so medicines and other essential food items can be sent to Kurram district. Meanwhile, the House also offered Fateha for the departed souls of innocent people who lost their lives in Kurram. Raja Nasir Abbas led the Fateha on the request of Chair.

Meanwhile, as many as eight reports of various standing committees, including Science and Technology, Finance and Revenue, Communication, National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination and Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, were presented in Senate. The reports were presented by Kamil Ali Agha, Mohsin Aziz, Pervaiz Rashid, Amir Waliuddin Chishti and Qurat ul Ain Marri in the House respectively. Chairman, Standing Committee on Science and Technology Kamil Ali Agha presented the report on a bill further to amend the Pakistan Halal Authority Act, 2016.



CM Murad Ali Shah calls for governance within police to ensure justice

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, addressing the Association of Former Inspectors General of Police (AFIGP), emphasised the urgent need for governance within the police force to ensure justice, neutrality, public service, and on top of its community policing.

"There is a dire need to align police operations with Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's vision of discipline, impartiality and service to the nation instead of bringing drastic reform."

He delivered his remarks at the AFIGP Annual Conference on the topic of 'Police Reforms: Transforming Challenges into Opportunities' at CPO. Home Minister Ziaul Hassan Lanjar, Inspector-General (IG) Police Ghulam Nabi Memon, forty retired IGPs, serving senior police officers and members of civil society were in attendance.

In his address, the CM said that Quaid-e-Azam believed that the police are the servants of the public, not their masters. Therefore, the police force must maintain neutrality, justice and discipline to strengthen governance, he added. He invited former IGs for further discussions over tea to deliberate on bridging gaps in the police system. He acknowledged that reforms in the Police Act were essential, stating that If everything was perfect, "we

wouldn't be working on reforms today." He added that, instead of reforms, the police needed governance, capacity building, and community policing methods and attitudes.

Discussing independence and accountability, the CM stressed the importance of keeping the police free from external pressures whether political, financial, or religious. However, he highlighted the necessity of oversight, noting that supervision is vital because the police are a service, not a force. Accountability ensures that wrongful actions are scrutinised. Shah remarked that whenever the government recommends the posting of any officer or policeman, the recommended officer is often characterised as lacking integrity. "The integrity issues lie with police officers, not the government," he said.

Regarding policy making and operational freedom, Murad Ali Shah clarified that policy making is the government's responsibility, while day-to-day operations should remain with the police. He added that former officers could contribute to policy discussions, but the ultimate responsibility rests with the government.

Speaking on the role of civil society, Shah emphasised its importance in supporting better policing and ensuring transparency. On the topic of judicial oversight, the CM expressed concerns about judicial orders that dis-

rupt governance, urging the judiciary to consider their implications on the ground conditions. He cited examples where an IG Police was removed in the past, and currently, the Executive Director of Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre (JPMC) has been barred from working without consideration for how the largest health facility in the country would function.

In comparing the police service with the Armed Forces, Murad Ali Shah remarked, "Unlike the armed forces, police promotions are less structured. However, merit must be the cornerstone of advancements in the police system." The CM concluded by calling for a collective effort from the government, police, and civil society to enhance governance and public service. He stated, "The vision of Quaid-e-Azam provides us with a clear roadmap: discipline, accountability and impartiality must guide the police force."

Minister of Home Affairs Ziaul Hassan Lanjar remarked that the Police Order -2022 was significantly better than the police order introduced by General Pervez Musharraf. IG Police Ghulam Nabi Memon also spoke on the occasion. President AFIGP Afzal Shigri read his written remarks urging the government to implement necessary reforms where required.



LAHORE: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi in a meeting with Ameer Jamat e Islami Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman. —APP Photo

Sindh to establish Films and Drama Production Board

E.P. Report

KARACHI: The Information Department of the Government of Sindh has announced its decision to support individuals involved in the film and drama industry by establishing the Films and Drama Production Board.

The Films and Drama Production Board was formed by the Information Department of the Government of Sindh following approval from the Sindh Cabinet.

The decision to establish the board was taken during a key meeting chaired by Sindh Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit Sharjeel Inam Memon. The meeting was attended by Secretary Information Nadeem-ur-

Rehman Memon, Director Advertisement Muhammad Yousuf Kaboro, Sarang Latif Chandio, and other officials.

Addressing the meeting, Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the newly established board would facilitate film and drama production and also the people associated with the sector. He said it would play an important role in the promotion of cultural representation and creative talent.

He said the board would facilitate the people associated with the film and drama industry.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon emphasized that the Sindh government is committed to highlighting the rich and diverse culture of the province and its comprehensive historical heritage.

He said that the Information Department is taking concrete steps to promote new talent and positive thinking in Pakistan, especially in Sindh, should be promoted through film and drama.

He further said that in contributing to overcoming social evils and weakening their impact, one will have to take the assistance of civil society, artists, and people from all walks of life.

Sharjeel Inam Memon said that, considering the problems faced by the media industry, the need of the hour is to provide more support for its development, the Sindh Information Department would continue to play its role in positive thinking among the public by utilizing all available resources.

Pollution: number of dry cough patients in hospitals increase

LAHORE (APP): Due to increasing air pollution, the number of patients with dry cough and difficulty in breathing continues to increase. Pneumonia, chest infections and dry cough are becoming common in children, eye irritation and skin diseases are also increasing, while heart disease and asthma patients are also severely affected.

Dr. Muhammad Hassaan, practising pulmonologist at Jinnah Hospital, told APP that influenza and viral infections are spreading in hospitals, children and the elderly are falling ill in large numbers, patients with breathing difficulties should not leave their homes, lung and asthma patients need to take special precautions.

Lahore in winter often witnesses worst air quality which normally stays from October to February in the Punjab capital when farmers are blamed for setting light to the remnants of their crops, producing smoke which adds to smog.

Dr. Hassan said that the best possible thing is that one should avoid exposure to such air, adding we have already started witnessing a rise in the number of patients of common cold and flu. For those who have to go outside for different reasons, mainly bikers, must take protection and keep their face covered in severe cold.

This weather condition can lead to rhinopharyngitis, throat infection, bronchitis and lungs infection. Those who suffer from nasal allergy should also take care of themselves in these weather conditions, Dr. Muhammad Hassaan informed.

Saudi Shura Council delegation visits PCCR

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: A distinguished parliamentary delegation from the Shura Council of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, currently on a three-day visit to Pakistan, visited the Parliamentary Caucus on Child Rights (PCCR) at the Parliament House on Thursday.

The Convenor of the PCCR, MNA Dr. Nikhat Shakeel, extended a warm welcome to the Shura Council delegation, which expressed its sincere appreciation for the hospitable reception. Dr. Shakeel briefed the delegation on the objectives of the newly established caucus and informed them about its recent consultancy visits to the provincial assemblies of Pakistan to encourage the



formation of similar caucuses at the provincial level.

Dr. Shakeel further outlined the caucus's efforts to promote the welfare of children, detailing the contributions of its members toward ensuring access to quality education for children aged 5-16, the eradication of child labor, addressing the issue of out-of-school children, provid-

ing quality healthcare, and combating violence and exploitation, among other critical issues affecting children.

The delegation engaged in a productive and insightful discussion with the following PCCR members: MNAs Ms. Zahra Wadood Fatemi, Ms. Asia Naz Tanoli, Mr. Kesoo Mal Kheal Das, Ms. Zeb Jaffar, and Begum Shahida.

Police announces crackdown on traffic violations

KARACHI (INP): The Sindh Police on Thursday announced a province-wide crackdown on traffic violations starting January 1st, 2025. This decision was revealed during a press conference at the Central Police Office (CPO) in Karachi on Thursday.

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Sindh Ghulam Nabi Memon, Additional IGP Karachi Javed Alam Odho, and senior traffic officials, including DIGs of Traffic and Driving License Branch, addressed the media.

IGP Ghulam Nabi Memon highlighted that a lack of proper driving licenses is a major contributor to road accidents. He stressed that strict action will be taken against drivers found without licenses.

Punjab cabinet approves sending medicines, other goods to people of Parachinar

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif chaired the 21st meeting of the provincial cabinet to discuss and decide on important agenda items.

The cabinet approved sending medicines and other goods on the request of people of Parachinar. The chief minister said, "A mobile healthcare unit will also be sent as per needs of the people of Parachinar." She directed the authorities concerned to send relief goods to the people of Parachinar as soon as possible. She added, "The people of Parachinar are our own people; we cannot leave them alone in trouble and difficulty."

The provincial cabinet congratulated the chief minister on her successful visit to China. She said that the extraordinary reception received by the delegation in China was a source of pride for the people of Punjab. She added that China developed by making 1.6 billion people its strength. She highlighted, "China's development is an example to be emulated, we too can achieve all that by working hard."

Maryam Nawaz said "not even a single piece of paper is seen lying in schools, hospitals and on roads of China."

"The attitude of the Chinese people to recognise authority is worthy of imitation and there was an indescribable degree of harmony in the thoughts of Chinese people," she observed.

Maryam Nawaz Sharif said that she wish Punjab to develop like China every day. She added that Chinese investors were eager to invest in Punjab and despite holiday, the participation of representatives of large business organizations in the Punjab

round table conference on Saturday was commendable.

The Chief Minister said that representatives of 60 prominent and large Chinese companies expressed their willingness to invest in Punjab while China-Punjab Desk has been approved. "Cancer tumors can be eliminated with liquid nitrogen in a machine as big as an ultrasound while China's latest technique for cancer treatment eliminates the need for chemotherapy, she asserted.

Maryam Nawaz Sharif said that soon in a hospital in Punjab, a pilot project of Chinese cancer treatment technique will be started. She highlighted that PML-N Quaid Muhammad Nawaz Sharif also appreciated the successful visit to China and said that he had not seen such a reception in 40 years.

The Chief Minister said that she thoroughly observed agriculture, IT, environment, education, health and other sectors during visit to China and will try to bring those to Punjab as well.

"The Punjab delegation was given an unbelievable reception in China, our expertise and keen interest in various issues surprised the Chinese Ministers", she stated. The CM underscored that under Punjab Clean Air Program approved with the support of World Bank, multi-sectoral measures including e-bus, charging station and super seeder will be introduced in the province.

The provincial cabinet gave approval of the completion of Pakistan's first green building project. Madam Chief Minister directed the authorities concerned to introduce a farmer-friendly Wheat release policy for the year.

The Cabinet approved 2024-25 Sugarcane (Development) cess rates maintained in crushing season 2024-25. It was briefed that agricultural inputs worth Rs 30 billion have been purchased using Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's Kisan Card. It was also apprised that 100% wheat cultivation target in Punjab has been achieved.

The Cabinet was further briefed, "4500 tractors have arrived under the Green Tractor Scheme, 1000 of which have been delivered." The Cabinet was also updated, "For the first time, DAP fertilizer rates have neither increased nor decreased in Punjab. The Chief Minister approved funds for free medicines in hospitals. The Cabinet approved the promotion of shrimp farming and aquaculture in Punjab, besides the approval of terms and conditions for leasing the government land. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif directed the relevant authorities to take vigorous steps for the promotion and export of shrimp farming across Punjab.

The Cabinet approved amendment in Punjab Vagrancy Ordinance 1958, under which punishment for begging children has been increased from 01 to 10 years. It also approved funds for Phase-III of 'Apni Chhat, Apna Ghar program.' Madam Chief Minister directed not to stop funds for the program, and gave approval of the scheme to install latest automatic umbrellas in the courtyard of Data Darbar.

The Cabinet approved the recruitment of Special Monitoring Unit of I&C on vacant posts, and approved relaxation of restriction for recruitment again posts of Directorate of Monitoring

of Home Department. It also gave approval of relaxation in recruitment rules of Rescue 1122 emergency staff. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif directed to further expand the scope of rescue emergency services.

The provincial cabinet gave approval of Punjab Education Curriculum Training and Assessment Authority, besides the approval to develop Qila Kahna Qasim Bagh Multan for the promotion of tourism and protection of cultural heritage. It also approved amendments in Punjab Motor Vehicle Ordinance 1965 for effective implementation of Axle Load Management Regime in Punjab. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif directed the relevant authorities to take steps to provide furniture in government schools, besides approving the School Management Council Policy 2024.

The Cabinet decided to increase financial authority to Rs 2.5 million for hundreds of toilet blocks constructed under School Management Council in Punjab. It was briefed that 1100 new rooms are being built under School Management Council across Punjab.

The Cabinet also approved Constitutional Amendment Bill 2024 to include nutrition in basic human rights. It also approved the establishment of Advisory Committee for Laboratory Certification under Punjab Environment Protection Act. Approval of reconstitution of Protected Areas Management Board, and the reconstitution of Punjab Wildlife Management Board was also given by the Cabinet. It also approved Council of Rights of Persons with Disability.

Grand Christmas celebration held at LGH, PINS

LAHORE (APP): A grand ceremony was organised at Lahore General Hospital (LGH) and Punjab Institute of Neurosciences (PINS) on Thursday to celebrate Christmas, express solidarity with the Christian community, and promote interfaith harmony.

A highlight of the event was the cutting of a 600-pound cake using a ladder, symbolising the grand scale of the celebration.

Principal of Ameeruddin Medical College and Postgraduate Medical Institute (PGMI), Professor Al-Fareed Zafar, extended heartfelt congratulations to the Christian community. He emphasized that belief in Prophet Jesus (PBUH) and all other prophets is a fundamental aspect of Islamic faith. "Christmas delivers a message of love, generosity, forgiveness, hope, and spirituality, encouraging individuals to lead better lives," he said.

Executive Director PINS, Professor Muhammad Asif Bashir, echoed these sentiments, stating that Christmas teaches compassion, kindness, and love for humanity. He urged everyone to embrace these values in their daily lives.

Professor Zafar also highlighted the Christian community's significant contributions to Pakistan's development, particularly in the fields of medicine and education, commending their invaluable services. He remarked that the community's role extends beyond religious significance, contributing globally to peace, humanity, and societal progress.

Medical Superintendents Dr. Umar Ishaq and Dr. Faryad Hussain affirmed Pakistan's constitutional guarantee of equal rights and religious freedom for all minorities. They noted that minorities in Pakistan freely worship and celebrate their religious festivals, a testament to the

nation's inclusive spirit. DCNS Fazilat Lal and Nursing Superintendent Asia Khanum lauded the Christian community for establishing numerous educational institutions across Pakistan, where children of all faiths receive quality education. She also acknowledged the vital role of nurses in the healthcare sector, serving humanity with professionalism and dedication.


The ceremony concluded with special prayers for Pakistan's progress, stability, and solidarity with Kashmiri and Palestinian brethren.

Attendees also reaffirmed their commitment to hard work in their respective fields.

The event was attended

by notable personalities, including Dr. Haseeb Thand, Rana Parvez, Arshad Butt, Junaid Mayo, Waris Aftab, Shehzad Roshan, Majeed Raj, Amanat Ali, Khalida Tabassum, Sister Kausar, Maryam Shagufra, Nudrat Mukhtar, and Maryam Bashir.

Participants exchanged gifts with the Christian community, shared sweets, and enjoyed traditional hymns sung by the attendees. The celebration concluded with a feast, reflecting the spirit of love and unity. A large number of representatives from the Punjab Paramedical Staff Association, nursing officers, and health professionals also participated in the event.



Khyber College Dentistry Peshawar (MTI)

INVITATION FOR BIDS

Khyber College of Dentistry, Medical Teaching Institute (KCD-MTI) invites sealed Bids from eligible bidder registered with FBR for Income Tax, Sales Tax, KPRA (for services) and reflected on Active Tax Payer (ATL) list of FBR for the Below mentioned services. Detailed of services, specification, submission, opening and method of evaluation is provided in bidding documents. Following Bid Security/earnest money is required to be submitted in shape of Call Deposit Receipt (CDR) from schedule bank of Pakistan in favour Dean Khyber College of Dentistry.

Sr.	Description	Bids Security PKR	Procurement Method
1	Outsourcing of KCD Pharmacy Shop	200,000	Single Stage Single Envelop

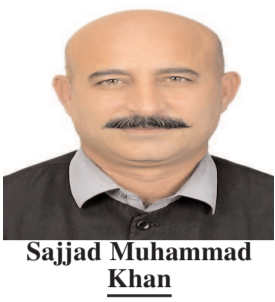
- Only typed bids on original letter pad, sealed & signed shall be submitted, hand written tender shall not be acceptable. The tenders must be according to hospital specification; alternate rates will not be acceptable.
- Income Tax, stamp duty, KPRA Tax (for Services) and Professional Tax or any other Government tax will be charged as per rules.
- A complete set of Bid Solicitation Document may be downloaded by interested Bidder from website of Khyber College of Dentistry (KCD-MTI) (<https://kcd.edu.pk/tenders>) after publication of this advertisement in the newspaper till last day for submission of Bid.
- Procurements will be carried out as per Act and Rules of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (KPPRA)
- A bid accompanied by Pay Order (PO) shall be rejected.
- Bids are to be delivered to the office of the Assistant Manager Purchase & Procurement, Khyber College of Dentistry (KCD-MTI) on or before 08 January, 2025 at 11:00 AM (PST).
- Bids shall be opened on the same day at 11:30 AM (PST) in the presence of bidders who choose to attend.
- The advertisement is also available both on the websites of KP-PPRA and KCD.
- Khyber College of Dentistry (KCD-MTI) reserves the right to cancel any or all bids by assigning cogent reason under Rule 47 Khyber Pakhtunkhwa public procurement Regulatory Authority.

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DEAN

KHYBER COLLEGE OF DENTISTRY, PESHAWAR

Visit of Kaiwan Hamid Raja AVT Channels Executive Director to DHA Peshawar, exploring future collaborations



Sajjad Muhammad Khan

PESHAWAR: Kaiwan Hamid Raja, Executive Director of Strategic and Digital Communication at AVT Khyber Channels, visited DHA Peshawar last days. Administrator Brigadier Haroon Rahim warmly welcomed Kaiwan Hamid Raja upon his arrival at DHA Peshawar, presenting him with a bouquet of flowers. During their meeting, Kaiwan Raja engaged in a fruitful discussion on potential areas of mutual cooperation.

tion. The primary focus of the meeting was on the recently successful Winter Fest 2024 event, which was supported and sponsored by DHA Peshawar.

Mr. Raja expressed his gratitude for DHA Peshawar's valuable support in the success of the event. Brigadier Haroon Rahim acknowledged the role of AVT Khyber Channels in promoting events and highlighting the representation of the Pashto language and Pashtuns, urging for continued prioritization of such activities.

Both Mr. Kaiwan Raja and Brigadier Rahim showed deep interest in topics for future collaboration that would benefit both organizations. They discussed possible partnerships in various fields, including event management, content creation, and community development.



ment. The meeting concluded with the exchange of commemorative items, symbolizing the strong cooperation between DHA Peshawar and AVT Channels Network.

Brigadier Rahim presented a special shield to Kaiwan Hamid Raja, commending his excellent strategies. Station Manager Peshawar Kamran Jan was also awarded the shield for his outstanding performance in Winter Fest 2024 event. Members of the AVT Khyber Channels delegation, including Usman

Amin, AGM Production Khyber Digital (North), Muhammad Amin, Mashal Manager Coordination Khyber Digital (North), Akbar Ali famous pashtu singer and Senior graphics Designer, Waqar Khan, and Hania Fahimi, were also presented with gifts.

Mr. Kaiwan Hamid Raja's visit to DHA Peshawar is a significant symbol of the growing alliance between the two organizations. Their shared commitment to promoting the city's culture and

community development is expected to yield fruitful results in the coming days.

As a key media pillar, AVT Khyber Channels has been at the forefront of promoting the Pashtun cultural heritage and serving the broader interests of the Pashtun community. Kaiwan Raja also praised DHA Peshawar's efforts in developing the city's infrastructure, promoting community development, and providing a high quality of life for its residents, stating that the partnership between AVT Khyber Channels and DHA Peshawar exemplifies the strength of cooperation and a shared vision to promote Peshawar as a dynamic and flourishing city. Both organizations are anticipated to achieve significant successes together in the near future, benefiting the people of Peshawar and beyond.



Fakhar highlights role of educated youth in promoting peace



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs, Syed Fakhar Jehan Khan, emphasized the critical role of educated youth in promoting peace, development, stability, and tolerance within society.

He expressed these views during the inaugural session of a two-day national symposium titled "The Role of Youth in Preventing Violent Extremism," held at the Department of Criminology, University of Peshawar.

The symposium was organized collaboratively by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Center of Excellence on Countering Violent Extremism (KPCVE), the University of Peshawar, Islamic Relief Pakistan, and the Directorate of Youth

Affairs. The Symposium was attended by teachers, administrative officials, policymakers, representatives of various institutions, and students from different departments. Speakers included KPCVE Chief Coordination Officer Dr. Ayaz Khan, Head of the Department of Criminology Professor Basharat Hussain, and other leading experts.

Provincial minister Syed Fakhar Jehan Khan noted that the youth are increasingly affected by drug addiction, social deviance, and the negative use of social media. He stressed the importance of society, particularly educational institutions and teachers, in playing a pivotal role in guiding the younger generation to become valuable national assets.

Highlighting the impor-

ance of the youth's role in peacebuilding, he stated that the educated younger generation can eradicate extremism from the region through the power of knowledge.

Dr. Ayaz Khan elaborated on various aspects of peacebuilding, ranging from grassroots community efforts to the formulation of national policies and promoting positive messages through social media.

He emphasized the urgent need for practical steps to maintain law and order in the country. Dr. Ayaz also underscored the importance of conflict resolution techniques, the role of media, and the use of social media for disseminating positive messages.

He described the establishment of the Center of Excellence on Countering Violent Extremism in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as a

significant step toward eradicating extremism and fostering tolerance and harmony.

He added that following the success of this initiative in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, similar centers are now being established in other provinces of Pakistan to counter violent extremism.

Professor Basharat Hussain, Head of the Department of Criminology at the University of Peshawar, highlighted the importance of youth participation in national matters under the theme "Youth Voices."

Students from various departments presented projects and presentations aimed at fostering peace and harmony within communities.

These presentations showcased the innovative and proactive approaches of the younger generation toward creating a peaceful society.

Under the auspices of KPCVE, students were provided opportunities to work with experts, activists, and scholars in the field of peace and conflict studies. The networking session aimed to foster collaboration and mentorship, empowering youth to play an active role in peacebuilding initiatives.



PESHAWAR: President of the Local Council Association and Mayor of Mardan, Himayatullah Mayar addressing a press conference at the Peshawar Press Club.

Quaid-e-Azam Inter-Provincial Games Khyber Pakhtunkhwa secures second position with 98 Medals

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: On the final day of the Quaid-e-Azam Inter-Provincial Games, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa clinched gold medals in both kabaddi and badminton finals by defeating Punjab.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa displayed an impressive performance throughout the games winning a total of 98 medals including 29 gold, 31 silver, and 38 bronze securing second

position overall. The games were held in Islamabad where Khyber Pakhtunkhwa excelled in athletics winning 6 gold, 5 silver, and 7 bronze medals, totaling 18.

In karate the team bagged 4 gold, 7 silver, and 5 bronze medals making a total of 16. In judo they secured 5 gold, 2 silver, and 7 bronze medals. Taekwondo brought another 9 medals including 5 gold, 1 silver, and 3 bronze.

In badminton Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's players won 3 gold and 1 bronze medal, while squash added 2 gold, 1 silver, and 2 bronze medals. The team also claimed first place in men's volleyball and kabaddi while finishing second in football and hockey.

Other notable achievements included 6 silver and 2 bronze medals in wrestling, 4 silver and 3 bronze medals in table tennis, 1 silver and 2 bronze

in weightlifting and 1 silver and 2 bronze in boxing. The swimming team earned 3 bronze medals.

Women athletes from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa contributed significantly, winning 31 medals including 7 gold, 10 silver and 14 bronze.

Punjab topped the overall medal tally with 78 gold, 53 silver and 42 bronze medals while Sindh finished third with 16 gold, 28 silver, and 35 bronze medals.

Ulema joins hand to counter violent extremism in KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Mutahidda Ulema Jirga (MUJ) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa issued joint declaration to eliminate extremism, terrorism and separatist factors from society, on Thursday.

The MUJ was established and founded by Dr. Qila Ayaz (former Vice Chancellor University of Peshawar and ex-Chairman Islamic Ideological Council) seven years ago at historical Masjid Mahabat Khan Peshawar.

President International Research Council on Religious Affairs (IRCRA) Muhammad Israr Madani enlightened participants about aims and objectives of MUJ. He stated Ulema can play key role in eliminating extremism and separatism from gross roots.

The founder Dr. Qibla Ayaz voice notice played

before participants due to his absence from the jirga due to his busy schedule. He argued participants for establishing counter narrative against extremism, separatism and violence from society.

Maulana Yousaf Shah requested MUJ members for social activism for elimination of violence from society. He added that Ulema has upper hand in society for promoting peace narrative among masses.

Moreover, Qari Rooh Ullah Madani said that current national socio-economic crisis is result of violent extremism in Pakistan. He added that availability of resources with terrorist's organizations rising questions about their sponsors.

Professor Sahib Islam stressed upon ending of tribal and sectarian division to achieve goal of one Ummah.

He argued to make national curriculum on basis of high moral and divine values for elimination of violence from society.

However, Allama Abid Hussain Shakiri said that international players are destabilizing Muslim's world by sectarian basis and nationalities. He added that debacle of Damascus is critical step toward establishment of Greater Israel.

Maulana Inshan Ullah Junaidi stressed for joint working government stakeholder for sustainable peace and development.

He added that extremism can be eliminated by collective efforts of government, civil society and thinkers with critical role of Ulema in the process.

Dr. Iqbal Haidari argued for activism of MUJ to approach public gross root and clear-cut narrative

against violent extremism. He stressed that the jirga must approach opposing parties at Kurram to end violence on sectarian lines.

Meanwhile, Dr. Sadique Ali Chisti claimed that global circumstances are impacting youth irrespective of their locality due to social media which has destroyed moral fabric of society. He added that jirga must work for welfare of public and the country to ensure sustainable peace.

The MUJ claimed that violent extremism had destroyed economy and social fabric of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa while argued for collective efforts irrespective of political affiliation.

The speakers claimed that jirga will approach all stakeholders to end violence in Kurram and ensure sustainable peace in Pakhtun belt.

Winter blooms brighten Peshawar with Gul e Dawoodi exhibition

PESHAWAR (APP): As winter settles over Peshawar Valley, the vibrant colours and captivating fragrance of Gul e Dawoodi (Chrysanthemum) are adding a refreshing touch to the city's historic charm.

Once Known as the "City of Flowers," Peshawar is celebrating the winter season with an impressive display of winter blooms, particularly at the University of Agriculture (UoA), where a two-week-long exhibition held, attracting Gul e Dawoodi lovers from across the city and adjoining districts.

The impressive event, organized by the Department of Horticulture at UoA, features a stunning array of 30 varieties of Gul e Dawoodi, alongside French and African varieties of Gul e Sadburg (Marigold) brought joy on faces of Peshawarties..

The exhibition has become a significant attraction for flowers lovers and horticulturists besides drew in visitors from all walks of life, including students, faculty, and nature enthusiasts, eager to witness the colorful spectacle.

The inauguration ceremony of the exhibition saw the presence of prominent figures, including Arshad

Khan, Secretary of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Higher Education Department (HED), and Prof. Dr. Jehan Bakht, the Vice Chancellor of UoA.

Both dignitaries expressed their admiration for the efforts of the university's gardeners, who have worked diligently to create such a beautiful display.

They also commended the Department of Horticulture for its ongoing initiatives to enhance the breeding and lifespan of the Gul e Dawoodi, one of the region's most beloved winter flowers.

In his address, Prof. Dr. Jehan Bakht emphasized the role of research in promoting national development, urging the faculty to continue their valuable work in agricultural innovation.

He said that horticulture department are being encouraged to explore and find new varieties of Gul e Dawoodi and ensure such exhibition yearly basis.

Dr. Fazl e Wahid, a key faculty member involved in the exhibition, offered insights into the scientific research efforts focused on improving these flowers, highlighting their various benefits and potential applications.

He said Gul e Dawoodi is a winter season flowering

plant with extra ordinary big flowers on two feet long stems.

The different vibrant colours of gigantic flowers make Gul e Dawoodi one of the most demanded seasonal flowering plant of winter.

Perfect for home decor, he said it purified air production, normalizing temperature, adding extra care needed for the provision of water and light.

He said that its growth depends on the atmosphere, nature and weather, adding soil and atmosphere of northern belt of Pakistan especially Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Central Punjab were ideally suited for its growth.

Among the visitors at the exhibition was Fayaz Khan, a retired schoolteacher from Nowshera, who shared his love for Gul e Dawoodi.

"Gul e Dawoodi is my favorite winter flower, and I came all the way from Nowshera to see its different varieties on display at this exhibition," he said, adding that the exhibition's vibrant colours and soothing fragrances bring joy and energy to the cold winter days.

Fayaz said that since his childhood he was coming to Peshawar for Gul e Dawoodi exhibitions and

planted its varieties at home. He said that it was heart-breaking to see air pollution that has engulfed Peshawar City these days.

Instead to fragrance of Gul e Dawoodi, he said that Peshawarties were exposed to air pollution hazards.

"My wife was complaining about breath problems for the last two years and finally died at Lady Reading Peshawar due to COPD disease" said Misal Khan, a retired Govt employee with sad eyes.

He said that unchecked brick kilns and hundred of thousands of vehicles emissions have increased the problems of residents of Peshawar.

Misal Khan said that such impressive flowers exhibition was a great blessing for people and thanked the University of Agriculture for organizing a successful exhibition of Gul e Dawoodi.

The sight of these colorful blooms serves as a reminder of nature's beauty and resilience, brightening the lives of Peshawar's residents during the winter months.

The event not only celebrates the region's horticultural diversity but also fosters a deeper appreciation for the importance of research and innovation in agricultural practices.

PAS, UoP organize conference on climate change

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Academy of Sciences (PAS), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chapter has arranged a two days international conference in collaboration of University of Peshawar (UoP). It covered a wide range of themes related with climate change.

The Chief Guest of this event was Prof. Dr. M. Naeem Qazi, Vice Chancellor UoP. The keynote speakers were included Prof. M. Qasim Jan (TI, SI, HI, Fellow PAS and Fellow TWAS), Prof. Khan Bahadar Marwat (SI, Fellow PAS), Prof. M. Tahir Shah (TI) and Prof. M.

Nafees. Prof. Qasim Jan delivered his talks on reducing environmental risks and ensuring green development in mountain regions, while Prof. Khan Bahadar Marwat talked on phyto-invasion impacts biodiversity and climate change.

Similarly, Prof. Tahir Shah shared a presentation on exploitation of mineral and energy resources and their role in the environmental degradation and climate change and Prof. M. Nafees (Ex-Chairman) talked on the impact of climate change on biodiversity in Pakistan.

Prof. Sardar Khan (TI, Fellow PAS) gave a brief introduction of the Pakistan

Academy of Sciences and highlighted its contributions towards the promotion of science and its application for the welfare of the humanity.

The students of different universities were also attended this conference. As members of the organizing committee, Dr. Shahla Nazneen and Dr. Saeeda Yousaf worked hard to make this event successful.

The Vice Chancellor Prof. M. Naeem and Prof. Qasim Jan presented shields and certificates to the speakers at end of the event. Prof. Sardar Khan (Chief Organizer) of the conference thanked the Pakistan Academy of Sciences for financial support,

the organizing committee, keynote speakers, speakers and all authors and co-authors who contributed their work and abstracts.

This conference provided an opportunity for both faculty and students to exchange their ideas and knowledge with each other that may helpful to minimize the climate change impact on agriculture, water and ecological resources.

The speakers proposed some significant recommendations and mentioned some strategies for controlling climate change and protecting the ecological resources from degradation.



In brief

15 injured in bus, truck collision F.P. Report

NAROWAL: At least 15 people have been injured during an accident at Narang Mandi Road in Narowal district when bus and truck collide due to fog. The injured have been shifted to nearby hospital. The bus was going to Lahore from Narowal. Meanwhile motorway has been closed for all types of traffic at various points due to heavy fog in the wee hours on Thursday, reported 24NewsHD TV channel. According to motorway police due to smog M2 Motorway has been shut for traffic from Lahore to Jaranwala and Hiran Minar interchanges. Moreover, M1 Motorway has been closed from Swabi to Peshawar region.

Four smugglers killed

KHARIAN (INP): Four proclaimed offenders including a notorious drug smuggler were killed in a 12-hour-long encounter with police in Gujrat. Drug smuggler Faisal alias Feeji, his nephew and two others were responsible for the martyrdom of Elite Force constable Tariq Aziz a few days back. The shootout took place in Hanj village on Wednesday night and ended on Thursday morning. Resultantly, the four wanted accused were killed in the encounter. A large number of Elite Force officers and Punjab police personnel took part in the operation.

Pesco, Wapda officials protest F.P. Report

KOHAT: Like other parts of the province, a protest meeting was organized by PESCO, WAPDA officials in Kohat on the call of provincial leaders of All Pakistan WAPDA Hydro Electric Workers Union, led by Provincial Leader of Hydro Union, Haji Younis Shah, Mohammad Daud (Circle Secretary and Chairman Rural Division), Syed Abbas Raza (General Secretary Rural Division Kohat) and Syed Isa (Deputy Chairman Khyber Circle). While the special guests Provincial General Secretary APWHEWU KPK, Provincial Secretary Noor ul Amin Hyderzai, Provincial Deputy Chairman Nasirullah Mohmand and Nasir Khan Secretary Workers Welfare also addressed the protestors. The speakers demanded to stop the proposed privatization on IMP pressure and control its lavish expenditures, should. There are more than 18 thousand vacancies in PESCO but the government is not recruiting and using delay tactics, they said. They added, experienced staff is going to retire while the government has adopted a temporary and part-time policy which is not in the interest of the company.

Interfaith harmony stressed F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: Deputy Commissioner and District Police Officer presided over an important meeting of the District Peace Committee and Interfaith Harmony. In the meeting, a comprehensive strategy was considered to ensure peace and order and promote interfaith harmony on the occasion of December 25 (Quaid-e-Azam Day and Christmas) and New Year. In the meeting, Additional Deputy Commissioner General Zeeshan Labbha Masih, Scholars, Christian leaders, representatives of civic organizations, and relevant government departments Officers attended.



LANDI KOTAL: Students of Postgraduate College blocked Pak-Afghan Highway in protest for acceptance of their demands. — F.P. photo

Students describe difficulties of soldiers

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The University of Malakand (UoM) organized an orientation session with the five students who recently visited Surgulo Sar border with Pak-Afghan border. The UoM vice chancellor Prof Dr Rashid Ahmad, Commander Dir Scouts Brigadier Sanaullah, faculty members and students of the varsity attended the session.

The visiting students including Mr Anees ur Rahman from Psychology department, Mr Umar Shah from Physics, Asim Nisar from Computer Science, Aman Shahzad from Journalism and Azeem Khan from Information Technology department along with the varsity PRO Mairaj ul Hamid Nasri had visited Pak Afghan border upon the invitation of Commander Eleventh Corps; Gen. Omer Ahmad Bukhari.

The visiting students shared their observations and remarks regarding the life of a soldier serving on the border, difficulties they face, complications related to their routine life. The students were of the opinion that a common man cannot live for even a single day like the soldiers of Pak Army and FC North live for safeguarding the nation and borders of the state leaving their families behind in a dismay for ensuring comfort of the civilians.

Commander Dir Scouts

Brigadier Sanaullah while addressing the audience shared his experiences of serving the nation at borders, his sentiments and emotions while the students were on the border, perceptions of common men and the propaganda against Pak Army.

He also appreciated the zeal of the students and their resilience to steadfastness in the harsh weather at the border. In concluding remarks, Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Rashid Ahmad thanked Corps Commander Peshawar; Gen. Omer Ahmad Bukhari and Frontier Corps North for inviting and facilitating the students and enlightening their perspective and horizons through arranging this excellent opportunity.

Oath taking: The School Officers' Association (SOA) provincial president Samiullah Khalil and All Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Subject Specialists Association (AKSSA) provincial president Salar Islam administered oath to the newly elected office bearers of the associations for Lower Dir during a function held at Timergara. The SOA and AKSSA cabinet members, schools' heads from across the district and education officers attended the function.

The function was addressed by the SOA provincial president Samiullah Khalil, AKSSA provincial president Salar

Islam, SOA district president Ali Gauhar, general secretary Sherin Zada, AKSSA district president Yousaf Khan, general secretary Haroon ur Rashid, SOA former president Salah ud Din and others. They demanded the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government to expedite the promotion process of schools' officers under the four-tier formula.

Martyrs' anniversary: The 15th anniversary of the Balambat police line blast was observed with zeal and spirit at Balambat. A suicide bomber had blown himself up near the Balambat police lines mosque on Dec 18, 2009, after the Friday prayer, killing 15 worshippers and injuring 27 others on the spot. The Shakil Shaheed Development Organization (SSDO), a charity working for uplift of martyrs' children in Dir, arranged a function at Balambat.

The function was attended by police officers, relatives of martyrs, social and political activists from the area. The participants laid floral wreaths on 'yadgar e shuhada' and offered fateha for the departed souls. The function was addressed by SP investigation Rashid Ahmad, SSDO chief Peer Imtiaz Ahmad, former provincial minister Muzafar Said, JUI-F district chief Siraj ud Din, social activists Akbar Khan, Ibrash Pasha and others. The speakers paid tributes to martyrs and vowed to continue supporting their families.

Severe cold causes viral diseases in Waziristan

F.P. Report

WANA: The tribesmen experiencing a severe cold wave, leading to a dangerous increase in seasonal illnesses among children, the elderly, and others. According to the South Waziristan Health Department, over the past month, more than 12 newborns have lost their lives due to the harsh cold, while hundreds of individuals have been affected by illnesses such as flu, cold, pneumonia, and whooping cough.

Health department officials state that the primary cause of newborn deaths is the lack of adequate facilities and warmth at birth. Health experts have warned that if immediate measures are not taken, the number of affected individuals may rise further.

Local residents have expressed serious concerns over the inactivity of government hospitals and basic health units (BHUs) in the region. They claim that these facilities lack essential medical resources and that doctors and other staff are often absent. Citizens have urged authorities to activate hospitals and BHUs in the area, establish special wards for newborns, and provide heating arrangements to address the effects of seasonal changes on an urgent basis. Public and social circles have appealed to the government to take immediate notice and activate the healthcare system to prevent further loss of precious lives.

Road widening re-approved Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister on Law and Parliamentary Affairs Aftab Alam Afridi Advocate, former Federal Interior Minister and Senior PTI Leader Shehryar Afridi MNA, Chairman DDAC Kohat Shafi Jan MPA and Daud Shah Afridi MPA, the City Road Widening Plan from Katchery Chowk to PAF Chowk in Kohat has formally been re-approved by the Provincial Planning and Development Department which will cost about Rs.800 Million.

The widening of this road was a long-standing demand of the people of Kohat, as due to which traffic jam has become a daily routine here. Keeping in view the increasing traffic and public problems, the road will be widened by setting back the shops and markets coming in the way of this widening project. The people of Kohat have welcomed the formal approval of the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for this important project of the city and have expressed the hope that it will help in the smooth flow of traffic in Kohat.

Meanwhile, Commissioner Kohat Division Syed Motasim Billah Shah is closely monitoring the polio campaign in the entire division. After the districts of Kohat and Karak, Commissioner Kohat Division reached Hangu in the morning where he visited various areas and health facilities of the district along-with the Deputy Commissioner Hangu Gohar Zaman Wazir. Local elders and volunteers also accompanied them.

KP govt prioritizes health's sector: Saif

Anees Ur Rehman

MARDAN: Advisor to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations Barrister Dr. Muhammad Ali Saif has said that the provincial government is taking concrete steps for the development of the health sector. Sehat Sahulat Card is the flagship project of our government, under which millions of patients have been treated at a cost of billions of rupees.

District Headquarters Hospital Mardan is an important and historic hospital in the province, which has been providing medical facilities to the people of Mardan as well as other adjoining districts. He was talking to the hospital administration and later to the media during his visit to District Headquarters Hospital Mardan. Upon reaching the hospital, Medical Superintendent Dr. Javed Iqbal received the Information Advisor along with senior doctors of the hospital. Deputy Commissioner Mardan Dr. Azmatullah Wazir, ADC Saeedullah Jan were also present on the occasion.

While briefing the Information Advisor, it was informed that District Headquarters Hospital Mardan is an institution with the status of a teaching hospital which is providing



the best medical facilities to the people. He said that the relevant institutions have approved the house job vacancies in Mardan Hospital however there is a budget problem which is pending in Finance Department.

Speaking on the occasion, Barrister Saif revealed that he himself was born in DHQ Hospital Mardan, which was also an important hospital in the province at that time. MS Dr. Javed Iqbal took Barrister Saif to visit the Gynecology Section and told him that this labor room is still present at almost the same location with modern facilities. Barrister Saif said that along with the house job vacancies in Mardan Hospital, other financial and administrative issues will be brought to the notice of the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and

the Minister of Health and necessary steps will be taken to resolve them.

Barrister Saif said that despite the federal government stopping the provincial government's funds, the government is providing the best services to the people with limited resources. The Advisor also administered polio vaccine drops to a child in the hospital and paid tribute to the sacrifices of health workers and especially police personnel for the eradication of polio in the country. He said that those who sacrificed their lives in the struggle to save the nation's children from diseases are our real heroes. On this occasion, Deputy Commissioner Mardan Dr. Azmatullah Wazir and MS of DHQ Hospital Dr. Javed Iqbal presented commemorative shields to the Advisor on Information Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif.

College students block Pak-Afghan highway

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Students of Postgraduate College, Landi Kotal suspended Pak-Afghan road and boycotted their classes on Thursday in protest against the decision of the provincial government to affiliate the college with FATA University.

Hundreds of students of the college forcibly suspended teaching and learning activities in the institution and then they put hurdles on the main Pak-Afghan highway and closed it for all kinds of traffic including vehicles, loaded with transit, export and import to and from

Afghanistan. They chanted slogans against the decision of elimination of their college affiliation with the University of Peshawar and declared it injustice to them.

Speaking on the occasion President of the students union of the college Mr Daud, Nabeel Shinwari and others rejected affiliation of the Postgraduate College, Landi Kotal with FATA University and said ending of 47 years old attachment of the college with UoP without any reason was unfair.

District Khyber comprises Peshawar Region therefore affiliation of the Postgraduate College, Landi

Kotal to Kohat Region against the basic rule of the Higher Education Department, they argued.

They maintained that getting education was their privilege and through the unfair means of the concerned authorities, they could be deprived of their rights. After assurance of the officials to resolve the matter within two days, the Pak-Afghan road was resumed however the students continued their boycott and warned that if the provincial government didn't issue notification of the college affiliation with UoP in two days then they would suspend the highway for indefinite time.

UET Software Technology Park role appreciated

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Water and Sanitation Services Company Mardan (WSSCM) on Thursday visited the Software Technology Park established at University of Engineering and Technology (UET) Mardan and reviewed the facilities being provided to the citizens by Information Technologies companies. He also inspected various sections of the park and met with owners of the companies.

Speaking on the occasion, Shahid Khan stated in the present era the importance of information technology has increased and only through the effective

use of IT we can overcome the administrative problems faced by the institutions. He said that in the light of the directions of the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Minister Local Government and Secretary Local Government, WSSCM has also started working on digitization and most of the departments of the company have been digitized while work is underway on the rest.

Shahid Khan stated that smart collection is being started for garbage collection in Mardan city with the aim of providing the best services to the citizens in a short time. He said that government institutions should also improve their

performance by moving away from traditional methods and using modern digital methods. Information Technology is a vast field that has made life easier in various walks of life.

On this occasion, Chairman Mechanical Department UET Mardan Professor Dr. Asad Ali, District Youth Officer Mardan Usman Khan, Facility Manager Software Technology Park Majid Khan, Chief Executive Officer of ECW Track Irshad Ahmed, of Go Jins Company, Manager Municipal Services WSSCM, Media and Communication Officer Junaid Yousafzai and others were also present.

Employee union demands fixing of case before SC

F.P. Report

PABBI: A meeting of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Advocates General Office Union was held under the chairmanship of Chairman Ahmad Khan. The meeting was attended by President Ismail, along with other officials, including Noman, Arshad Khan, Ayyaz Khan, Ashfaq Ali Manzoor, and union members.

During the meeting, Chairman Ahmad Khan and President Ismail appealed to the Chief Justice of Pakistan and other Supreme Court judges to expedite the hearing of their petition for judicial allowance, which has been pending for over 10 years. They requested that the petition be heard and decided as soon as possible, as many members of the Advocates

General Office Union have passed away, retired, or are about to retire.

Chairman Ahmad Khan and President Ismail expressed their disappointment and concern over the delay in hearing their petition, stating that it is inexplicable and unacceptable that the lowest member of the judiciary's household is being treated with such disregard.

Four drug peddlers held, ice worth Rs7m seized

BUREWALA (INP): Police arrested four members of an inter-district drug gang and seized six kilograms of crystal methamphetamine (Ice) worth over Rs 7 million.

Gaggu Mandi police said here on Thursday that the team set up a picket at Shah Junaid Chowk. During the checking, a suspicious car

was intercepted, and upon inspection, four kilograms of ice were discovered concealed in the vehicle.

The drugs were reportedly being shifted to Burewala for distribution. The suspects, identified as Arif and Naved, hail from Pir Mahal and Arifiwala, respectively. In another operation, City

Police arrested two more drug dealers, Khalil Ahmed Jhrolla, a resident of Mian Channu, and Shafqat Hussain Sargana from Toba Tek Singh. The police seized two kilograms of ice from their possession. Both suspects were taken into custody and separate cases were registered against them.

Govt to distribute 9500 green tractors

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Chief Minister's Coordinator for Population Welfare Department, Ex-Federal Minister Saira Afzal Tarar and Deputy Commissioner Abdul Razzaq said that present government allocated Rs. 30 billion to provide 9500 green tractors on subsidiary prices to growers for not only increasing per acre agriculture yield but also improving socio-economic condition of farmers across the province including Hafizabad district.

They expressed these

views while addressing inaugural ceremony of distribution of green tractors held at district complex, on Wednesday. MPA Aoun Jhangir Bhatti, Mian Thahawur Hussain Tarar, Muhammad Zaman Bhoon, ADCR Tanveer Yaseen, Director Agriculture Gujrat Division Irfan Ullah Warriach, Deputy Director Agriculture Hafizabad Muhammad Yousaf and a large number of farmers participated in the function.

Saira Afzal Tarar and DC Abdul Razzaq also said that green tractor scheme was a revolutionary step of the Punjab government and

one million of rupees subsidy was being given to growers on purchase of each tractor.

They said that 188 tractors were being given to farmers on merit through transparent balloting in the district Hafizabad whereas the Punjab government led by the Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif was started Kisan Card Programme to provide maximum relief to farmers. At the end of function, Saira Afzal Tarar, DC Abdul Razzaq, MPA Aoun Jhangir and other guests distributed keys of green tractors among growers.



GAZA STRIP: A damaged gate of Al-Aqsa University, which was destroyed during Israel's military offensive, stands in Khan Younis.

China has expanded its N-force and strengthened ties to Russia

WASHINGTON (AP): China is expanding its nuclear force, has increased military pressure against Taiwan and has strengthened its ties with Russia over the past year, according to a Pentagon report that details actions accelerating key areas of conflict with the United States.

The report, however, also notes that the recent rash of corruption allegations within China's powerful Central Military Commission, which oversees the People's Liberation Army, is hurting Beijing's military growth and could slow its campaign to modernize. The impact, said a senior defense official, is a bit of a mixed bag because while there has been progress in some programs, China has slid back in others.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to describe the US assessment, warned that Beijing is working toward developing a more diverse and technologically sophisticated nuclear force. While the expected number of nuclear warheads has maintained consistent growth, China is broadening its targeting abilities. Beijing is going to be able to go after more and different types of targets, do greater damage and have more options for multiple rounds of counterstrikes, the official said. The US is urging China to be more transparent about its nuclear program, while also warning that America will defend its allies and take appropriate steps in response. According to the report, which provides the annual US assessment of China's military power and is required by Congress, China had more than 600 operational nuclear warheads as of May, and the US expects it will have more than 1,000 by 2030.

The Chinese Embassy, in response, said China has always "firmly adhered to a nuclear strategy of self-defense," follows the no-first-use nuclear policy and maintains its nuclear capabilities at the minimum level required for national security. Liu Pengyu, the embassy spokesman, said such annual reports by the Pentagon are "filled with 'Cold-War' thinking and zero-sum game mentality, which China firmly opposes." The Biden administration has worked to maintain a balance with China, building up the US military presence in the Asia-Pacific region to be ready to counter Beijing while also encouraging increased communications between the two countries at the diplomatic and military levels.

The US report points to a persistent increased military presence by China around Taiwan, the self-governing island that China claims as its own. It said China's navy has been in the region more and that there have been increased crossings into the island's air defense identification zone and major military exercises in the area. Just last week, a large deployment of Chinese navy and coast guard vessels in the waters around Taiwan triggered alarm as Taiwanese officials said it looked like China was simulating a blockade. Officials have said there were as many as 90 ships involved in what Taiwan described as two walls designed to demonstrate that the waters belong to China. Taiwan split from communist China in 1949 and has rejected Beijing's demands that it accept unification. China says it will do so by force if necessary, and leaders have said they want to be ready to do so by 2027. Beijing also has demanded that Washington not interfere with the Taiwan issue, citing that it is an internal matter.

The United States is obligated under domestic law to help defend Taiwan and give it weapons and technology to deter invasion. The island democracy has been the chief source of tension between Washington and Beijing for decades and is widely seen as the most likely trigger for a potentially catastrophic US-China war. More broadly, the report concluded that the PLA continued its drive to develop greater military capabilities but "made uneven progress toward its 2027" milestone for modernization.

One area of expansion, the report said, is with unmanned aerial systems, which officials said are "quickly approaching US standards." Regarding Russia, the report said China has supported Russia's war against Ukraine and sold Russia dual-use items that Moscow's military industry relies on. Dual use items can be used for both civilian and military purposes.

S Korea's allies cheered Yoon's foreign policy, ignored domestic discord

SEOUL (Reuters): As South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol's relations with the opposition broke down this year, Western diplomats hoped the internal tensions would not affect his tough stance on China and North Korea that had won praise from Washington. It didn't work.

A focus on a foreign policy seen as favourable to the West, limited attention on the political discord in South Korea, and a hesitation to be seen interfering in domestic matters, left its partners blindsided when Yoon briefly imposed martial law on Dec. 3, analysts and current and former diplomats said.

Yoon is now impeached and his powers suspended - and his political implosion likely heralds the return of the political left, which is less inclined to be as unabashedly supportive of the US and Japan. "His allies in Washington are concerned about one thing and one thing only - US national security," said Karl Friedhoff of the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. "When I raised the (domestic) issue, I was bluntly told on one occasion, 'Why does that matter?' And now we're seeing why it matters."

The conservative Yoon earned wide praise in Western capitals for his signature policy goal of making South Korea a "global pivotal state" by promoting freedom, human rights and the rule of law. That policy saw Seoul weigh in more publicly on the side of Washington and NATO on hotspots such as the South China Sea, Taiwan, and Ukraine. Philip Turner, who served as New Zealand's ambassador to Seoul until last year, said Yoon had showed autocratic tendencies particularly since the April parliamentary elections but it was seen as a typical political show of strength. "Like Koreans themselves, including many of Yoon's own supporters, I don't think any diplomats thought that Yoon would go as far as to declare martial law with no basis - an excusable and inexplicable action from an ex-prosecutor who positioned himself as a champion of democracy," Turner said.

Yoon's Global Pivotal State approach will not be mourned, given the hypocrisy with which it finally collapsed, but if Yoon is ousted by the Constitutional Court following his impeachment, the West will hope the next president upholds much of its substance in practice, Turner said. Asked shortly after the martial law attempt whether it was an intelligence failure that Washington was caught unawares by a key ally, US Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell said almost all US interlocutors in South Korea, including in the president's office, were "deeply surprised" by Yoon's move.

US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan invoked the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the US Capitol by supporters of Donald Trump, when commenting on Yoon's move. "Did not see that coming, yeah, but we had January 6, yeah," Sullivan said at an event. "So I think it's important for us to recognise that dramatic events happen even in highly advanced, consolidated democracies."

Henry Haggard, a former US diplomat posted to the embassy in Seoul until June, disputed suggestions that Western countries ignored Yoon's hardline tendencies. "Korea chose Yoon so his foibles were relevant to South Korea, not to us," he told Reuters. "We did not expect this from Yoon, whether he was nostalgic for Korea's authoritarian past or not, because we assumed any president understood that almost no one in Korea sought to turn

EU leaders to send 'clear message' to Trump on Ukraine

BRUSSELS (Reuters): European Union leaders aim to send a "clear signal" to US President-elect Donald Trump at a summit about their continued support for Ukraine and will also discuss the security and economic challenges posed by his return to the White House.

The leaders will host Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at the start of their talks in Brussels and will reaffirm their "unwavering commitment" to supporting Ukraine "for as long as it takes", according to draft conclusions. Trump has repeatedly called for a swift end to the nearly three-year-old war. He said Zelenskyy should be ready to reach a peace deal with Russian President Vladimir Putin, though he did not say whether this meant Kyiv ceding territory to Moscow as part of a negotiated settlement.

Russian forces currently occupy nearly a fifth of Ukrainian territory and are making steady advances in the east of the country, "Russia must not prevail," the EU draft conclusions say, adding that no initiative must be taken on Ukraine without Kyiv's involvement.

One EU diplomat described the draft text as sending "a clear signal to the US". The leaders will also discuss wider EU-US relations over lunch amid concerns of a possible transatlantic trade war. Trump has said the EU will "pay a big price" with tariffs for not buying enough US exports. He has already pledged hefty tariffs on three of the United States' largest trading partners - Canada, Mexico and China. The EU knows it will not be spared.

Some EU diplomats said the key for the bloc would be unity and avoidance of Washington conducting discussions or deals with single EU members - a copy of its largely successful unified strategy for dealing with Britain during Brexit negotiations. "The US might try individual negotiations but so far I have not seen countries falling for that," one EU diplomat said.

Syrian leader says transitional govt should not exclude any party

DUBAI (Reuters): Hadi al-Bahra, head of the Syrian National Coalition that grouped opponents of Bashar al-Assad during the civil war, said Syria's transitional government should be credible and not exclude any Syrian party or be based on sectarianism.

In a seismic moment for the Middle East, Syrian rebels seized control of Damascus on Dec. 8, forcing Assad to flee after more than 13 years of civil war, ending his family's decades-long rule. The lightning offensive raised questions over whether the rebels will be able to ensure an orderly transition.

Representatives of the Syrian National Coalition had not met Syrian rebel leader Ahmed al-Sharaa, but had communications with the caretaker government and parties close to him, al-Bahra said during a press conference in Istanbul. Forces under the command of al-Sharaa - better known as Abu Mohammed al-Golani - replaced the Assad family rule with a three-month transitional government that had been ruling a rebel enclave in Syria's north-western province of Idlib. Al-Sharaa is the leader of the Islamist Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), which is designated a terrorist group by Western and regional powers. Newly appointed Prime Minister Mohammed al-Bashir formerly led an HTS-affiliated government in Idlib.

The Syrian National Coalition would return to Syria and set up headquarters there, former Syrian opposition leader al-Bahra said, adding that he intended to return as well. "Logistics should be worked out and freedom of speech should be guaranteed," he added.

Russia says it will protect its citizens in Moldova's Transdniestria

MOSCOW (Reuters): Russia will protect its citizens and peacekeepers in Moldova's separatist Transdniestria region, foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said. Zakharova was speaking as the separatist enclave's parliament appealed to Moscow for help resolving disruptions in natural gas supply linked to the expiry at the end of December of an agreement allowing Russian gas to transit through Ukraine.

"Russia will react adequately to any provocations and will ensure the protection of its citizens, peacekeeping contingent, servicemen of the task force of Russian troops and military warehouses in the settlement of Kolbasna in Transdniestria," Zakharova told a briefing. Any actions that threaten them would be considered by Moscow as an attack on Russia, she added. Breakaway pro-Russian Transdniestria has existed generally peacefully side by side with Moldova since a brief post-Soviet war in 1992 and some 1,500 Russian "peacekeepers" remain in the country. But Moldova's pro-European leaders accuse Moscow of "gas blackmail" in trying to destabilise it. Both Moldova and Transdniestria have declared states of emergency over the threat of a disruption of gas supplies passing through Ukraine. The speaker of Transdniestria's parliament, Alexander Korshunov, said the appeal was sent to the Kremlin and to both houses of Russia's parliament to clinch a new accord ensuring further supplies of Russian gas through Ukraine. Moldova's government, he said, also had to act to secure a deal. "We are waiting," local media quoted him as saying. "Matters here do not depend on Transdniestria." Ukraine has said it will not extend the transit deal. Moldova has held discussions with Russian state gas company Gazprom on securing Russian gas and suggested supplies could be shipped through Turkey, Bulgaria and Romania.

US alarmed Russia close to accepting nuclear-armed NK

UNITED NATIONS (Reuters): The United States voiced alarm at the United Nations Security Council that Russia was close to accepting a nuclear-armed North Korea, as Moscow and Pyongyang defended their growing cooperation. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said in September that Moscow viewed the notion of "denuclearising" North Korea as a closed issue, as it understood Pyongyang's logic of relying on nuclear weapons as the foundation of its defence.

"Alarmingly, we assess that Russia may be close to accepting North Korea's nuclear-weapons program, reversing Moscow's decades-long commitment to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula," said US Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield. "We believe that Moscow will become more reluctant not only to criticize Pyongyang's development of nuclear weapons, but also further obstruct passage of sanctions or resolutions condemning North Korea's destabilizing behavior," she said.

South Korea and Britain both criticized Lavrov's remarks, saying he had undermined the global non-proliferation regime. Britain's Deputy UN

Ambassador James Kariuki described Lavrov's comment as a "reckless departure from the agreed principle of complete, verifiable and irreversible disarmament." Russia's UN Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia did not reference North Korea's nuclear program when he addressed the council. He defended the growing cooperation between Moscow and Pyongyang as Russia's sovereign right.

"Russian cooperation with the DPRK ... is in accordance with international law, not in violation thereof," he said, using the acronym for North Korea's official name. "This is not directed against any third countries. It does not pose any threat to states in the region or the international community, and have no doubt we will continue to develop such cooperation." Russia has forged closer diplomatic and military ties with North Korea since invading Ukraine in February 2022 and Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un have visited each other's countries.

Russia is using North Korean troops to battle Ukrainian forces holding an enclave in Russia's Kursk region. North Korea's UN Ambassador Kim Song described the closer ties

with Russia as a "positive contribution to international peace and security." Citing what Pyongyang sees as a US-led nuclear-based military bloc in the region, he also said: "Outbreak of the nuclear war in Northeast Asia is no longer a possibility, but a matter of time." South Korea's UN Ambassador Joonkook Hwang warned the Security Council to "expect further uncertainties looming over the horizon" ahead of US President-elect Donald Trump taking office for a second term next month.

"North Korea has a history of provocative actions during US presidential transitions, designed to grab attention, raise the stakes and set the stage for direct negotiations with the new US administration," Hwang said. "This pattern can recur within the upcoming months. This time it could be another ICBM (intercontinental ballistic missile) or military satellite launch or even its seventh nuclear test," he said. North Korea has been under UN Security Council sanctions since 2006, and the measures have been steadily strengthened over the years with the aim of halting Pyongyang's development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles.

France counts cyclone cost as aid reaches Mayotte

PARIS (AFP): French authorities searched for survivors and raced to supply aid as they sought to work out the full scale of the devastation wrought by Cyclone Chido on the Indian Ocean archipelago of Mayotte.

France's President Emmanuel Macron will be in Mayotte, his office announced, with officials warning of a death toll reaching hundreds -- possibly even thousands -- from the most destructive cyclone to hit the archipelago in 90 years. After the French overseas territory emerged from a first night under curfew, rescuers raced to find survivors in the ruins of shantytowns while also unblocking roads and clearing rubble.

Bulldozers were clearing the heliport of the island's only hospital, while residents were busy repairing their metal-sheet huts. Cyclone Chido was the latest in a string of storms worldwide fuelled by climate change, according to meteorologists. Experts say seasonal storms are being supercharged by warmer Indian Ocean waters, fuelling faster, more destructive winds. Authorities imposed a nightly curfew to prevent looting. A preliminary toll from France's interior ministry shows that 22 people were confirmed killed and 1,373 injured. But officials said the toll could rise exponentially. "What I fear is that the toll will be far too high," French Interior Minister Bruno Retailleau, who visited Mayotte, told BFMTV, describing "colossal damage". "I have never seen a disaster of this magnitude on national soil," Prime Minister Francois Bayrou said. "I think of the children whose houses have been swept away, whose schools have been almost all destroyed and whose parents are extremely distraught." Cyclone Chido was the latest in a string of storms worldwide fuelled by climate change, according to meteorologists. Experts say seasonal storms are being supercharged by warmer Indian Ocean waters, fuelling faster, more destructive winds. Authorities imposed a nightly curfew to prevent looting. A preliminary toll from France's interior ministry shows that 22 people were confirmed killed and 1,373 injured. But officials said the toll could rise exponentially. "What I fear is that the toll will be far too high," French Interior Minister Bruno Retailleau, who visited Mayotte, told BFMTV, describing "colossal damage". "I have never seen a disaster of this magnitude on national soil," Prime Minister Francois Bayrou said. "I

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Ghana's SC dismisses challenges to anti-LGBT bill

GHANA (BBC): Ghana's Supreme Court has unanimously decided to dismiss two legal challenges to new anti-LGBT legislation that has been criticised by rights groups. Earlier this year, lawmakers passed a bill imposing three years in prison for people identifying as LGBT and five years for forming or funding LGBT groups.

Fear and uncertainty has gripped Ghana's LGBT community, already facing limited rights. The bill, considered one of Africa's most draconian anti-LGBT laws, has been condemned by the UN. Amanda Odoi and Richard Dela-Sky filed separate challenges to the bill to declare it illegal and prevent President Nana Akufo-Addo from signing it into law. President Akufo-Addo delayed signing it following the challenges to the bill. He said he would wait for the Supreme Court's decision.

But after several months of consideration, the judges said the case

couldn't be reviewed until the president had signed it into law. "Until there's presidential assent, there is no act," said Justice Avril Lovelace-Johnson as quoted by Reuters news agency. The two cases were "unanimously dismissed", Justice Lovelace-Johnson added. Ms Odoi and Mr Sky's lawyers told Reuters they weren't happy with the ruling and would explore their options after reviewing the full judgment. The proposed new legislation - The Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values bill - was backed by both of Ghana's main political parties. But Mr Sky said there were not enough MPs in the chamber when the vote took place. With his two-term presidency ending on 7 January, President Akufo-Addo has not yet revealed what he will do. Opposition leader John Mahama, who won this month's presidential election, has expressed support for the bill. If it becomes law, it is likely to face further

challenges in court. Gay sex is already punishable by up to three years in prison in the conservative West African country. But this new legislation has already had implications for the LGBT community, said Abena Takyiwa Manuh, senior fellow of Accra-based Centre for Democratic Governance. "Even without the passage of the bill, people have been attacking members of a certain community," he was quoted as saying by Reuters. "This kind of formalism actually put at risk the life and health of certain members of the community, and of course some of us who are human rights defenders."

The bill was first introduced to parliament in 2021 but faced many delays. When it was passed, the controversial bill sparked criticism from the finance ministry, which warned that Ghana could lose about \$3.8bn (£3bn) in World Bank funding over the next five to six years if it was passed.

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Yoon's martial law order

SOUTH Korea has a very vibrant and proactive civil society. All you need to do is walk around central Seoul on a Saturday or Sunday near city hall, the US Embassy or the Gyeongbokgung Palace to see South Korean citizens protesting - about just about everything. Some are pro-US and pro-Donald Trump while others take the opposite view. There are explicit protests and signs admonishing North Korea's Kim Jong Un, the Chinese Communist Party's persecution of Falun Gong, Israel's efforts to stamp out Hamas from Gaza, labor protests for and against the government and much more.

This proactive civil society was an important ballast preventing President Yoon Suk Yeol from imposing martial law on South Korea on Dec. 3. In this sense, Yoon's recent impeachment highlights the strength of South Korean democracy. Many citizens gathered in central Seoul to demand his impeachment and accountability for what they saw as an illegal declaration. Meanwhile, pro-Yoon supporters rallied to back his leadership, expressing concern over what a potential presidency of Lee Jae-myung, leader of the opposition Democratic Party (DP), would mean for Seoul-Washington relations, trilateral cooperation between South Korea, Japan and the US and efforts to deter an increasingly hostile North Korea, which has sent troops, munitions and armaments to support Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine. South Korea's flourishing civil society also contributes to a highly divided citizenry, and we can see that division clearly in protests for and against Yoon's declaration.

Yoon's party, the People Power Party (PPP), sits center-right on the political spectrum. It advocates for conservative family values, free-market principles, a strong and proactive partnership with the US, and under the Yoon administration, positive, future-oriented relations with Japan while finding ways to deal with sensitive historical issues between the two neighbors, primarily stemming from Japan's colonization of the Korean Peninsula. In practice, Yoon's efforts to make South Korea a global pivotal state, or GPS, paid dividends for his country. Under the August 2023 Camp David Principles framework, Seoul, Tokyo and Washington agreed to enhance their trilateral cooperation to deter North Korean and other aggression. Seoul and Tokyo were able to cooperate within the NATO Indo-Pacific 4 partnership to support Ukraine's resistance against Russia's invasion and begin the diplomatic work with European and trans-Atlantic partners on building a shared strategic understanding of the threats emanating from authoritarian states in the form of disinformation, cyberattacks and other hybrid tactics. Under Yoon's GPS initiative, South Korea was welcomed to the May 2023 Group of Seven summit in Hiroshima as an observer and participated in semiconductor production relocation discussions along with Japan, Taiwan, the Netherlands and the US.

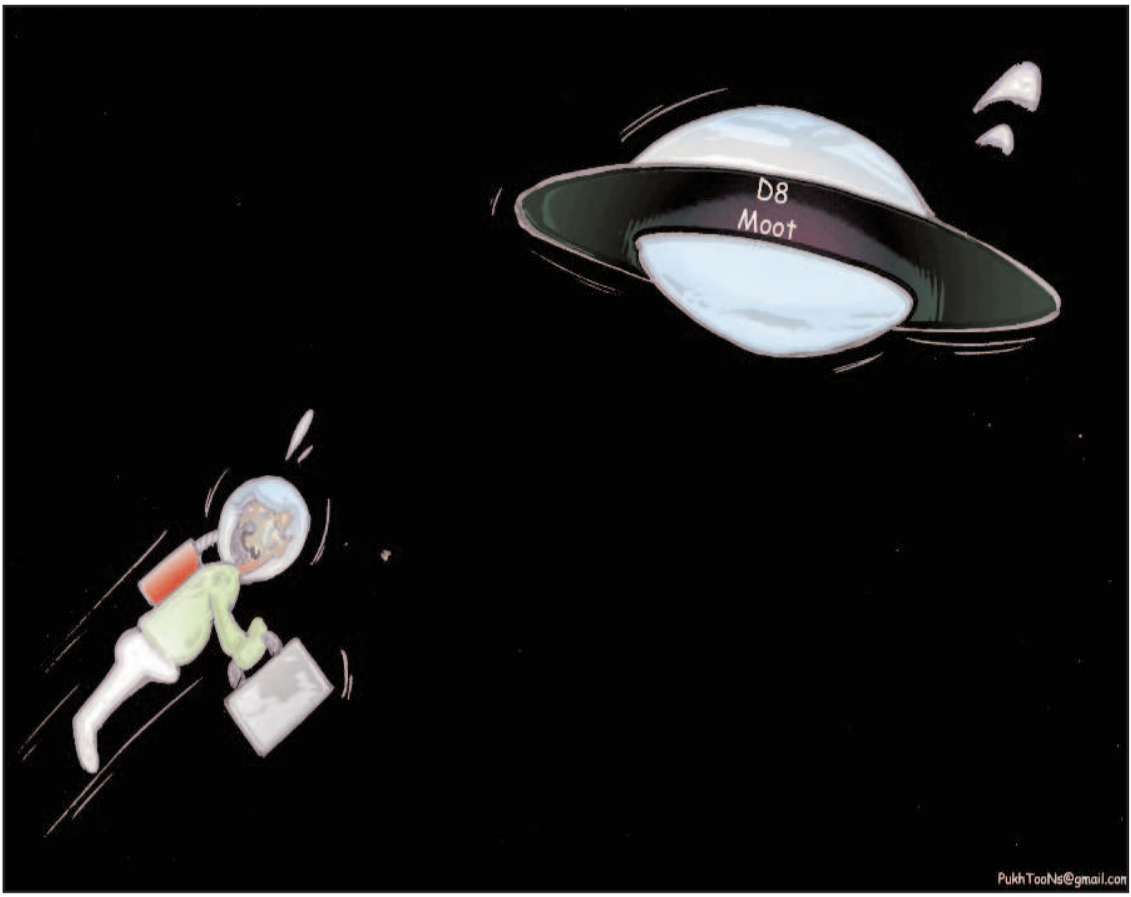
Still, it's believed Yoon's political inexperience - he was the prosecutor general from 2019 to 2021 before becoming president - led to criticism that he ran his government undemocratically. This perception was reinforced by his unilateral declaration of martial law. In contrast to the PPP, the opposition DP party is center-left, supporting greater human rights, improved relations with North Korea and an economic policy described as "new progressivism." Better relations with North Korea under a potential DP government could resemble the approach taken during the previous Moon Jae-in's presidency. His government's efforts were focused on reaching out to Pyongyang to reduce tensions on the Korean Peninsula and create conditions for family reunifications, South Korean investments in North Korea's development, and ultimately, a peace treaty.

During this period of Democratic Party rule, South Korea became unnecessarily antagonistic toward Japan, marked by several incidents that eroded trust between the two countries. One was so-called Japan-South Korea radar lock-on dispute in 2018 where a South Korean naval destroyer allegedly aimed its fire-control radar at a Japanese patrol aircraft near the Noto Peninsula in the Sea of Japan. In July 2019, the Japanese government further strained relations by removing South Korea from its "white list" of countries eligible for preferential trading. Additionally, the foundation established as part of a 2015 bilateral agreement to address the issue of "comfort women," who suffered under Japan's military brothel system before and during World War II, was dissolved, deepening tensions. Other disputes during this time also contributed to the breakdown in relations. South Korea's political divisions and Yoon's impeachment are already having unwanted consequences, both domestically and abroad. In the short term, no radical shift in foreign policy is expected, as the caretaker president, Han Duck-soo, lacks a democratic mandate to make real changes. In this context, opposition leader Lee could make governance difficult for the acting president if he deviates in foreign policy or adopts policies the opposition fundamentally opposes. Going forward, this will likely mean policy stagnation, as the acting president may hesitate to enact independent domestic or foreign policies. Like in other countries, bureaucracy will either freeze in terms of new initiatives or try to preserve existing gains in the absence of political leadership.

At this stage of what can only be described as a South Korean political "tragedy," the limits of the acting president's power and his ability to make consequential foreign policy decisions are still unclear. We will only truly understand the extent of his authority when an internal or external incident occurs, such as a natural disaster or provocation from North Korea, occurs. South Korea's allies will need to closely monitor domestic political changes there over the next six months as Yoon's political fate is decided. If the Constitutional Court removes him, an election will be called, likely resulting in a Democratic Party president. This could lead to a more antagonistic relationship with Tokyo, a distancing from Washington or an attempt to balance between China and the US. A shift in foreign policy would likely discard many of Yoon's signature policies, which would be highly disruptive not only for America, Japan and Taiwan, but for many of South Korea's allies who view Yoon's foreign policy as constructive, forward-thinking and balanced. Tokyo must collaborate with its partners to persuade any future South Korean leader that Yoon's GPS initiative brought significant international recognition as well as economic, political and security benefits domestically. This may involve continuing to invite South Korea to participate in the G7 as an observer state, creating avenues for Seoul to engage with "the Quad" or AUKUS, on a functional, ad-hoc basis, and supporting its bid to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership. Providing South Korea with a prominent role in other international organizations can also enhance its self-image, highlighting the tangible benefits of global engagement for its citizens.

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Zelensky's 'blink' could be Trump's chance to end the war

F. Andrew Wolf, Jr.

ON Nov. 29, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky told Sky News that he was willing to cede territory to Russia to end the war if NATO agreed to terms. Kyiv's Western backers are concerned about growing public discontent with Zelensky, whose public trust among Ukrainians has declined over the last year. The problem is that Zelensky fired the person Ukrainians appear to trust the most, former commander-in-chief Valerii Zaluzhnyy - some say because Zaluzhnyy was becoming too popular.

It is not just the protracted nature of the two-plus-year conflict that is a concern; it is also the current leadership's inability to make material gains in resolving it. This has become especially acute since the Ukrainian president's term in office expired last May - with no announcement about any forthcoming elections. US and top European officials have, for some time, been in discussions with Kyiv about possible peace negotiations with Moscow. Moreover, Stephen Bryen, former deputy undersecretary of Defense and a leading expert in security strategy says, "There is a growing consensus" that Western leaders want to replace Zelensky.

The US currently provides not only military hardware, advisors and other forms of support, but also financial means to fund the salaries of government officials as well as those of the Ukrainian military, including money for pensions. Given the huge investment of more than \$100 billion in Zelensky in particular and Ukraine in general, why would the US be willing to jettison Zelensky (or agree to negotiate) two years into the conflict? A primary reason is trust. Zelensky did not adhere to Washington's carefully crafted plan for Ukraine's counteroffensive. The White House leaked its concerns to lay the groundwork to justify replacing the Ukrainian president.

The Ukrainian president, however, has a more serious problem than the botched offensive. There is a growing perception that Ukraine will lose the war. Recently, Kyiv has mounted what has been described as a "fool's errand" - a last-

ditch, desperate incursion into Kursk to draw Russian troops from the Donbas in the hope of staving off further deterioration there and in the morale of its soldiers and population. To make matters worse, the situation on the front lines in the Donbas continues to deteriorate with Kyiv and Russia taking heavy losses.

Russia's advance on the

lacks the means to gain the upper hand against Russia and will "lose the war" if the situation continues as it is, former Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmitry Kuleba has told the Financial Times, adding that US President Joe Biden was too fearful of nuclear war to give Kyiv the weapons it would need to win.

backers) not occur, Ukraine will inevitably fail militarily, severely impairing the perception of NATO's deterrent capabilities in the region and perhaps beyond. The Ukrainian president is on record as being against any negotiation with Russia until Russian forces withdraw from Ukraine. Moreover, Zelensky refuses to call for elections for fear of losing control and thus power.

The options remaining for the US and its allies are daunting. While several possibilities remain to stop the conflict, Trump's newly appointed Ukraine envoy, former Lt. Gen. Keith Kellogg, has put forward a plan to end the war. Future US aid - likely given as a loan - will be conditioned on Ukraine negotiating with Russia, and the US will arm Ukraine to the extent it can defend itself.

The frontlines would be frozen by a ceasefire, and a demilitarized zone imposed. For agreeing to this, Russia would get limited sanctions relief, and full relief only when a peace deal is signed. A levy on Russian energy exports would partially pay for Ukraine's reconstruction. Ukraine would not be asked to give up on reclaiming occupied territory, but it would agree to pursue it through diplomacy alone. Kellogg concedes "This would require a future diplomatic breakthrough which probably will not occur before Putin leaves office."

Joining NATO is not a realistic option - at least in the current political milieu (irrespective of the political rhetoric from former NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg). However, a shift appears to have occurred. Zelensky said in November his country could give up land temporarily in exchange for a "NATO umbrella" over the territory Ukraine still holds.

He added that after a ceasefire was agreed, Kyiv could "diplomatically" negotiate the return of the territory in the east that is currently under Russian control. The comments represent a considerable shift in Zelensky's position. And it comes as Donald Trump prepares to take office with a promise to end the war on "day one." Barring any last-minute sabotage from the West (again), it appears the Ukrainian president might have just "blinked."

The goal apparently was to concentrate power into the president's hands and shift all the accumulated public discontent onto the current prime minister and his cabinet - in other words - away from Zelensky. Shifting blame is as meaningless as last-minute "reshuffling of deck chairs on the Titanic." Ukraine lacks the means to gain the upper hand against Russia and will "lose the war" if the situation continues as it is, former Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmitry Kuleba has told the Financial Times, adding that US President Joe Biden was too fearful of nuclear war to give Kyiv the weapons it would need to win. Kuleba's comments came after the US and France gave Ukraine permission to use their long-range missiles to strike internationally recognized Russian territory.

key city of Pokrovsk - a city of substantial strategic value - has only accelerated. The loss of Pokrovsk would have a cascading effect, leading to a broader collapse of Ukrainian defenses in the Donetsk region, thereby altering the course of the conflict. Futility can often be seen through events that distract from the issues. In September, over half of Kyiv's ministers were dismissed. The goal apparently was to concentrate power into the president's hands and shift all the accumulated public discontent onto the current prime minister and his cabinet - in other words - away from Zelensky.

Shifting blame is as meaningless as last-minute "reshuffling of deck chairs on the Titanic." Ukraine

Kuleba's comments came after the US and France gave Ukraine permission to use their long-range missiles to strike internationally recognized Russian territory. Washington previously admitted that these long-range missiles would not be a game changer. Continuous and escalating pressure is being exerted on Zelensky by European and other Western countries to alter his stance on the ongoing war and to sit down at the negotiation table with Vladimir Putin to end the conflict.

A noteworthy analysis from ABC News introduces the factor of President-elect Donald Trump, who is expected to take office on Jan. 20. Should negotiations (currently being pressed by Zelensky's

Bluesky could become target of foreign disinformation

Wenhao Ma

EXPERTS on cybersecurity and foreign influence campaigns are urging social media company Bluesky, whose app has exploded in popularity in recent weeks, to step up moderation to counter potential state-sponsored influence efforts.

Over the past month, Bluesky, a microblogging platform with its roots in Twitter, has seen one of its biggest increases in new user registrations since it was publicly released in February. Over 25 million are now on the platform, close to half of whom joined after the 2024 US presidential election.

Rose Wang, Bluesky's chief operating officer, said in a recent interview that Bluesky does not intend to push any political ideologies. "We have no political viewpoint that we are trying to promote," she said in early December. Many who joined Bluesky have cited user experience as one of the reasons for migrating from social media platform X. They also have said they joined the platform after Election Day because they are critics of Elon Musk and President-elect Donald Trump. Some commentators in the US have questioned whether Bluesky is risking becoming an echo chamber of the left.

Some experts contend the platform's liberal-leaning users could be exploited by foreign propagandists. Joe Bodnar, who tracks foreign influence operations for the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, told VOA Mandarin that Russian propaganda often appeals to the anti-establishment left in the US on contentious topics, like Gaza, gun violence and America's global dominance. "The Kremlin wants to make those arguments even louder," Bodnar said. "Sometimes that means they play to the left."

So far, at least three accounts that belong to RT, a Russia-controlled media outlet, have joined Bluesky. Sputnik Brazil is also actively posting on the platform. VOA Mandarin found that at least two Chinese accounts that belong to state broadcaster CGTN have joined the platform.

Bluesky does not assign verification labels. One way to authenticate an account is for the person or organization to link it to the domain of its official website. There are at least four other accounts that claim to be Chinese state media outlets, including China Daily, the Global Times and People's Daily. None of the three publications replied to VOA's emails inquiring about these accounts' authenticity. Additionally, Beijing has played heavily to the Western left on certain global issues. China has consistently called for a ceasefire in Gaza and blamed the West for supporting Israel.

But those familiar with Chinese and Russian state media say the left-leaning user base on Bluesky actually could give Beijing and Moscow a hard time for pushing their narratives. "Bluesky isn't the most hospitable place for Russian narratives," Bodnar said. Sean Haines, a British national who used to work for Chinese state media outlets, shared similar opinions in a recent blog post about Bluesky.

With its predominately Western liberal leaning, the platform also will be an uphill challenge for those

looking to push overtly nationalistic viewpoints," he wrote. Most of the Chinese and Russian state media accounts have only hundreds of followers, with RT en Espanol at the top, with nearly 7,000. China and Russia have been finding ways to reach the American public through covert disinformation operations on social media. During this year's election, disinformation campaigns connected to China and Russia promoted claims that cast doubt on the integrity of the voting process. Similar tactics could soon be coming to Bluesky.

"I don't think Bluesky is more vulnerable to influence campaigns than X or other social networks," Jennifer Victoria Scurrrell, a researcher on AI-supported influence operations, told VOA Mandarin. But Scurrrell, of ETH Zurich's Center for Security Studies, said Bluesky's decentralized moderation approach is flawed. Jack Dorsey, the founder of Twitter, started Bluesky as an internal project to give users more power over moderation. Bluesky then went independent in 2021. "Our mission is to develop and drive large-scale technologies of open and decentralized public conversation," the company says on its website. To do that, Bluesky "decentralized" its moderation authority, giving users tools to customize their experience on the site.

Bluesky offers a universal basic moderation setting for every user, which labels content such as extremism, misinformation, fake accounts and adult content. Users can choose whether to see the content labeled by Bluesky. Users can report to Bluesky content or accounts they believe have violated Bluesky's guidelines. On top of that, users get to create their own moderation settings to label or filter out certain content and accounts. Other users can subscribe to these customized settings, should they choose.

Scurrrell, who helps test security weaknesses for OpenAI as a contractor, told VOA Mandarin the decentralized approach to moderation could be a double-edged sword. "Societal values are diverse, contextual and local, which makes decentralized moderation an appealing concept," she wrote in her replies to VOA. She warned that outsourcing content moderation to users, though, "raises serious concerns" because the approach would give bad actors the same amount of power as normal users.

In a recent blog post, Sarah Cook, an independent China watcher and former China director at Freedom House, urged Bluesky to label state media accounts, a practice exercised by many social media companies, so users know of these accounts' ties to foreign governments.

Eugenio Benincasa, an expert on Chinese cyber threats at ETH Zurich, asserts that studying how Chinese tech companies help Beijing surveil social media platforms and manipulate online discussions can help Bluesky better prepare. "It is crucial to thoroughly study the evolving influence tactics enabled by tools like public opinion monitoring systems to identify vulnerabilities that may have been overlooked or are emerging, in order to develop effective safeguards," Benincasa said. VOA

What Ankara Declaration means for Türkiye's relations with Africa?

Jonathan Fenton Harvey

HERALDING a shift in East Africa's geopolitical landscape, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan hosted Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud in Ankara, showcasing Türkiye's growing role as an important diplomatic actor in Africa.

After a reported seven hours of talks, the "Ankara Declaration" made successful progress in solving the disagreement over Ethiopia's surprise Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) [1] with Somaliland, the self-declared republic in Somalia, in January 2024. As per the January 2024 MoU, Ethiopia previously hoped to gain both commercial access and a naval base in Somaliland's strategic Berbera port on the Red Sea in exchange for Ethiopia recognizing Somaliland as a state.

Tensions escalated as Ethiopia, the world's largest landlocked country, sought sea access, while Somalia feared its sovereignty over Somaliland, recognized internationally as part of its borders, would be violated. It even sparked fears of a conflict, especially after Egypt deployed around 5,000 troops and sent weapons to Somalia following a defense agreement [2] in August, aimed at deterring Ethiopia. That underscored the need for calm mediation, as seen in Türkiye's proactive diplomacy, which began in an initial round of talks in early July 2024 and a second in August, aiming to get to the bottom of both sides' disagreements.

What started as "shuttle diplomacy," with President Erdogan conducting separate meetings with his Ethiopian and Somali counterparts, Abiy Ahmed and Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, the talks eventually culminated in bringing both lead-

ers together. In effect, Türkiye's mediatory efforts aimed to create a space for dialogue between the two leaders-evidently a more effective form of diplomacy-rather than attempting to impose a solution. Now, Ethiopia has agreed to recognize Somalia's territorial integrity in exchange for gaining commercial access to the Somali coastline. It will also ease Egypt's concerns about Somalia's sovereignty.

A further round of talks will take place in February 2025 to consolidate these efforts, including a technical delegation to detail how Ethiopia will gain equitable access to the sea while respecting Somalia's sovereignty. Türkiye's strong ties with both Ethiopia and Somalia uniquely positioned it to facilitate the Ankara Declaration. These ties have steadily expanded since 2011, when Ankara first donated substantial

humanitarian aid to Somalia during the country's devastating famine. [3]

This role grew further when, in 2017, it established the military facility in Mogadishu named TurkSom [4] to help train Somali forces, particularly for countering groups such as al-Shabaab, a long-standing destabilizing force in the country. This deepening engagement reflects Türkiye's broader strategy of fostering equitable partnerships in a region that has often been cautious about external interference.

It has also positioned Türkiye to fill an important gap, given that European nations and the United States (US)-which were historically influential in Africa-have reduced their engagement in the continent's disputes. Yet beyond merely offering an alternative to actors like the US, the European Union (EU) and China, the Ankara

Declaration has already enhanced Türkiye's credentials as a diplomatic actor among international actors, with the US, the United Kingdom (UK), Germany, the United Nations (UN), and others praising its diplomatic efforts [5] in resolving the Ethiopia-Somalia dispute. Given that faith in Ankara's mediatory capabilities, Western actors wishing to engage with the Horn of Africa in the future may very well see Türkiye as a vital bridge for collaboration.

Ankara will continue to play a role in consolidating Ethiopia and Somalia's ties, with President Erdogan planning to pay a visit to both countries in early 2025. Moreover, given the African Union's praise for the Ankara Declaration, it will boost trust in Türkiye's mediatory role across the continent, potentially in key areas like Libya and Sudan. Beyond mediation, Ankara's outlook has also

focused on trade and investment. And initially focused on the Horn of Africa, Türkiye has also expanded its engagement across the continent, building ties with West African nations like Nigeria and Senegal and in the Sahel.

It has been seen as a reliable partner in various forms of investment, especially in infrastructure. For instance, in 2023 alone, Turkish contractors were involved in around \$85.5 billion worth of construction projects, including airports, hospitals, railways, and housing projects, according to the Trade Ministry. [6] Combined, these efforts have strengthened Ankara's ties across the continent. While many African states may face individual challenges going forward, Türkiye's multid-sided form of diplomacy will likely further advance its cooperation across the continent going into 2025 and beyond.

Seizing moment: A US strategy to outmaneuver Russia in Syria

G. Alexander Crowther & Jahara Matisek

MOST strategies are about having long time horizons and patience. But timeliness, flexibility and rapidity can be a strategy in and of itself. The collapse of the Assad regime in Syria presents a rare opportunity for America to act. But President-elect Trump has written that "Syria is a mess, but is not our friend, & the US should have nothing to do with it. This is not our fight. Let it play out. Do not get involved!"

Unfortunately, there are a number of second-and third-order effects should the United States and its allies passively let events unfold. In fact, if the US acts decisively now, advantageous strategic conditions can be established in the Middle East and Eastern Europe that highly favor US national interests. The US - in conjunction with allies and partners - can help Syrian rebels form an institutionally strong state while putting Russian naval and air bases in Syria at risk of falling into rebel hands. This has at least two advantages.

First, it would give the US leverage against Russia in Ukraine to give Putin a strategic dilemma: Make a deal in Ukraine or lose two strategic bases in the Mediterranean. Second, helping the Syrians reconstruct a stable state and effect a political solution to their situation would remove the need for US troops on the ground. Besides ensuring that the battlespace is not ceded to transnational terrorists and

extremist factions, this specific line of effort supports Trump's long-standing goal of reducing the American military footprint in Syria and Iraq.

The uncertain state of play in Syria has significant implications for Russia: Both bases in Syria are crucial for Russia's power projection across the Mediterranean, which directly impacts the force posture of NATO members in the region. The potential loss of these strategic bases would severely undercut Russian military capability, credibility, and its ability to deploy private military contractors across Africa. Additionally, there are reportedly thousands of encircled Russian troops currently unable to evacuate from a number of forward bases around Syria. Such a situation allows the US to act decisively and tip the balance of power against both Iran and Russia especially as Syrian rebels have made clear their dislike of Iran and their proxy Hezbollah.

The US, European allies and neighboring countries have an opportunity to finance, mentor and advise Syrian rebel leaders committed to building effective governance structures while keeping Iranian and Russian influence at bay. The Jordanians, Iraqis, Saudis and Gulf Cooperation Council countries, and others can provide essential support on the ground to prevent Syria from becoming Libya 2.0 where victorious rebel groups splinter the

country into lawless fiefdoms because they cannot find mutually beneficial power-sharing agreements. Engaging with Syrian rebel commanders, neighboring Middle Eastern countries and European allies will be crucial in mediating a healthy post-conflict Syrian state.

However, several challenges must be navigated carefully. The main Syrian rebel group, Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), led most military operations that toppled the Assad regime. While HTS has expressed a willingness for a peaceful resolution, their past association with extremist ideologies requires careful handling and consideration. Hence, United Nations leadership has already called for reconsideration of the terrorist designation of HTS, which would legally permit countries to work with the new Syrian leadership. Aiding Syrian groups committed to building robust institutions and an effective state while isolating extremist elements will be critical for long-term stability. Humanitarian assistance should focus on ensuring all legitimate Syrian actors are involved in the political solution and aiding Syria's neighboring countries and addressing the ongoing humanitarian crisis, to include facilitating the resettlement of refugees and their well-being.

The urgency is clear: If the US does not act swiftly, Putin may negotiate a deal with the rebels

that preserves his two bases and personnel in Syria, removing that potential pressure point. At this moment, Syrian opposition leaders have committed to ensuring the security of Russian military bases and diplomatic facilities within Syria, but the situation is tense and there's no telling how long this guarantee might last. The Americans and Europeans have an exceptional opportunity to outmaneuver Putin, who is often viewed as a master strategist but has proved to be merely an adept opportunist.

Acknowledging this situation means recognizing this as another theater of great power competition, where significant decisions must be made to undermine adversaries like Russia. Hence, Western leaders should also negotiate and leverage Russia's de facto bases in Taboruk and elsewhere in Libya, under similar duress - as Putin may accept his losses in Syria and shift everything to Libya. The fall of the Assad regime means the US can reshape the strategic landscape in Syria and beyond. Acting decisively now can undermine Russia's and Iran's positions in the Middle East and strengthen US and European influence in the region. This strategic move requires timeliness, flexibility and a willingness to embrace the complexities of modern geopolitical competition. Now is the time to act to dismantle Russian military power in the region and stabilize the region.

The Hill

Trump and Musk unleash a new kind of chaos on Washington

Stephen Collinson

this ... and he's just learning about it ... he's just reading about it."

The collapse of the stop-gap spending bill presented Johnson, Trump and Democrats with risky dilemmas. Unless Johnson can pass some kind of spending measure by Friday at midnight, the government will partially shut down. Johnson's speakership suddenly is in huge danger after he was torpedoed by Trump and Musk and as several House Republicans said they'd not back his reelection. A government shutdown could have unpredictable political consequences since it would hurt many

"it would take a Christmas miracle" for him to change his mind. And Bryan Lanza, who served as a senior adviser to Trump's 2024 campaign, told CNN's Wolf Blitzer that a number of lawmakers were of the same mind. "The speaker doesn't have the votes right now. He would need to be saved by Donald Trump," Lanza said.

But if Johnson is in danger - only days after appearing at the Army v. Navy game in a show of unity with Trump and Musk on Saturday - his fate could complicate Trump's big inauguration party next year. Republicans are desperate for a fast start to make the most of the apex of Trump's power. A bruised

But all Johnson has succeeded in doing is putting his own job in jeopardy. Kentucky Rep. Thomas Massie told CNN's Raju that the speaker wouldn't get his vote in the next Congress, adding that "it would take a Christmas miracle" for him to change his mind.

Americans, potentially including seniors and veterans who rely on government help, and could also shutter vital federal functions. Trump's power-play is a gamble, since he has now triggered a standoff that may even linger into next year, potentially overshadowing the run-up to his inauguration on January 20. The showdown is also a test for Democrats. The party wouldn't want chaos to envelop Biden's final days in office. But they have little incentive to bail out Trump.

As lawmakers left the Capitol Wednesday night with no certainty of what would happen next or when they'd be able to go home for the holidays, the country lurched into the first crisis of the second Trump era. Outgoing Republican Senate leader Mitch McConnell summed up the commotion with a prediction for 2025. "Oh, this is the way it's going to be next year," he told his GOP colleague, Sen. Susan Collins of Maine, as they passed in a Senate corridor.

The size of Johnson's bill sparked uproar on conservative media. MAGA pundits were especially outraged that lawmakers awarded themselves a pay rise in the measure, weeks after an election that partly turned on inflation. Trump supporters pose this question: After Republicans won in 2024 on a promise to gut the federal government and slash budgets, why would they make their first act since Trump's triumph a classic year-end spending spree? "I've been a 'no' on it a long time," GOP Rep. Tim Burchett told CNN's Jim Acosta. The Tennessee lawmaker added: "President Trump ran on changing things. I say if we're going to pass something, pass it about three days into the next Congress and hand it over to Trump and let him handle it."

But many Republicans are worried about the political implications of a shutdown. And assuming they want a way out, any new bill must recognize current realities. Democrats - for a couple weeks more - control the Senate so they must be given some incentive to cooperate. And the GOP speaker will need Democratic votes in the House owing to his tiny majority and the reluctance of some on his side to back any spending. Johnson said he'd tried to sell his bill to Musk and his fellow co-chair of Trump's new Department of Government Efficiency, Vivek Ramaswamy, on a text chain. Explaining the "conservative play call" behind his plan, he said on "Fox & Friends" on Wednesday morning, "Instead of doing, you know, (Democratic Senate Majority Leader) Chuck Schumer, Biden spending for 2025, we push this decision into March." He went on: "So, the feature there is that we'll have Republican-controlled Congress and Trump back in the White House and we get to decide spending for 2025." But all Johnson has succeeded in doing is putting his own job in jeopardy. Kentucky Rep. Thomas Massie told CNN's Raju that the speaker wouldn't get his vote in the next Congress, adding that

ing election for speaker - like the 15 rounds it took to choose short-lived Speaker Kevin McCarthy in 2023 - would be counterproductive. And if Johnson, who was himself a last-ditch compromise from the backbenches, can't get elected speaker, who can?

In one of his posts on X, Musk suggested that the best path for Republicans would be to freeze Washington until Trump takes office. "No bills should be passed (by) Congress until Jan 20," he wrote. That would create a government shutdown that would last for weeks, saddle the president-elect with a massive crisis as soon as he takes office and cause considerable economic damage. And the Republican House majority will be even smaller to start Trump's term than it is now, making it even more difficult to pass anything. Musk's sabotaging of the Johnson stop-gap spending measure gave Democrats an early chance to land a blow on the coming Trump presidency. House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries raised the plight of Americans who would be harmed by a government shutdown. "We reached a bipartisan agreement to meet the needs of the American people and provide assistance to farmers, families, children, seniors, veterans, men and women in uniform and working-class Americans," the New York Democrat said. "House Republicans have been ordered to shut down the government and hurt everyday Americans all across this country."

House Democrats will meet Thursday morning to discuss next steps. But Jeffries' statement suggests they will stand firm and demand Trump back down. Politically, there is little incentive for them to help extricate Johnson and the president-elect from their corner. After all, Trump demanded they cooperate in passing a stripped-down bill without any of their priorities. And his order to raise the debt ceiling, which is expected to be reached in his second term, is a transparent attempt to place the political blowback for such a step on the current president before he leaves office and to spare himself. In fact, Trump said so himself: "Increasing the debt limit is not great, but we'd rather do it on Biden's watch." Republicans have historically made lifting the government's borrowing limit painful for Democratic presidents - several times driving the country close to a disastrous debt default. So why should Democrats help now?

The White House said it was up to Republicans to sort out the mess in the House. But there's no obvious path to do that, meaning Washington is clouded in uncertainty ahead of the holiday season. North Dakota Sen. Kevin Cramer told Raju he was frustrated that Trump had not made his bottom lines clearer sooner. And asked whether it was possible to raise the debt ceiling in only two days, he was doubtful. "But, you know, it's almost Christmas, it's amazing what people might do to get home."

CNN

Why Slovakia's Prime Minister Cozying up to Putin?

Dalibor Rohac

TWO weeks ago, Slovakia's Prime Minister, Robert Fico, confirmed officially that he was planning to join President Vladimir Putin in Moscow for the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II in May next year. The announcement followed Fico's earlier musings during his surprise appearance on Olga Skabeyeva's show on Rossiya 1 - a first by an EU leader in the recent past, if not in the entire history of the program. He told Skabeyeva, who is sanctioned by the United States, the EU and Britain, that he saw participating in next year's ceremonies as his "personal duty," and suggested that Russia was effectively invincible. If Russia ever appears on its knees, he said, it is because they are "tying their shoelaces."

Whatever Fico's flaws - and there are many - he displays a striking consistency in his foreign policy outlook. There can be no doubt that the views that he expressed were sincere and long-held. In contrast, Hungary's Viktor Orbán, to whom Fico is frequently compared, was a staunch Atlanticist in the 1990s and much of the 2000s. When responding to Putin's invasion of Georgia in the summer of 2008, for example, there was little daylight between Orbán and Russian hawks from Tallinn to Warsaw.

No similar shift can be detected in Fico's. Already in 2014, Slovakia's Prime Minister was among the earliest critics of sanctions against Russia, which he maintained were "non-sensical" and "ineffective." Throughout his career, Fico has been more than happy to cater to the latent anti-American undercurrent in Slovak public opinion, picking on NATO's 1999 bombing campaign against Milosevic's regime in Yugoslavia or the Iraq War, both of which he lambasted as acts of imperial hubris.

To understand Fico, it is worth

acknowledging that, unlike Orbán, who fancies himself a global mover and shaker, sitting as an equal at the negotiating table with Trump, Xi, and Putin, Slovakia's Prime Minister is a thoroughly parochial actor for whom, subtler considerations of international politics come as a distant overthought. To be sure, he is a successful and effective politician - but he lacks Orbán's ambition and his ideological agenda, aimed at remaking the political map of the Western world.

Fico's formative experience, which informs his foreign policy views, is one of upward social mobility afforded to ambitious apparatchiks from the Slovak part of then-communist Czechoslovakia in the era known as "normalization", which followed the Soviet invasion of the country in 1968. A young lawyer and a reliable party member, Fico had good reasons to believe his best days were still ahead of him, thanks to the communist political system.

In the 1990s, he transitioned seamlessly into the new system as a young member of parliament for the formerly communist, now reformed left-wing party. In addition to his academic work on the death penalty, his early political comments involved a defense of the social acquis of the communist era, such as scholarships, which had once helped him get to university and kickstart his promising career.

The nostalgia was tempered, at least initially, by a sense of pragmatism. When he founded his own political party Smer, (meaning "Direction" in Slovak) he sought to model its platform after the successful examples of third-way, left-of-center politics seen in Britain and the United States. Besides corruption, he zoomed in on the social costs of the transition from communism, criticizing the 'neoliberal' reforms required

of new EU member states but mostly steering clear of rank euroscepticism.

As he solidified his position as the leader of the largest catchall political party in the country, Fico would end up governing a kleptocratic pyramid, with himself at the top and with a governing agenda that has grown increasingly thin. Today, Slovakia has slipped behind Romania in its per-capita GDP, expressed in purchasing power parity terms - hardly a flattering legacy for a leader who served as Slovakia's prime minister at various times for over 11 years in the past two decades.

Throughout his time in politics, Fico's rhetoric has hardened continually, typically in response to outside events - such as Europe's refugee crisis of 2015 - and domestic shocks. When he was pressured to resign in the spring of 2018 after the murder of Ján Kuciak and his fiancée, Martina Kušnírová, Fico blamed the US embassy for trying to instigate a "color revolution" in Bratislava. When he returned to power in October last year, it was universally acknowledged that the new version of Fico was more ruthless and less inhibited than the calculating pragmatist of the past. The experience of surviving an assassination attempt in the spring of this year surely has driven home the urgency of making the most out of his time in office.

That has included giving Slovakia's foreign minister, Juraj Blánár, a green light to deepen the country's relationship with Russia. This year alone, Blánár met with Russia's Sergey Lavrov three times: in March in Antalya, on the margins of the UN General Assembly Meeting in New York in September, and at the OSCE meeting in Malta last week. The ministry staff and the rest of the Slovak delegation had been kept in the dark about the UN meeting

until the last moment.

In all three cases, Slovakia's government refused to elaborate on the content of the talks, letting Russian propaganda use all three opportunities to advance its own narrative. Following the meeting in Malta, Russians have claimed that Slovakia, alongside Hungary, has enthusiastically embraced Russian plans for a "Eurasian security architecture." Notwithstanding meek protests from Slovakia's foreign ministry against a Russian readout of the meeting, there are signs that Slovakia's pro-Moscow turn is not just rhetorical. Blánár, for example, has been purging Atlanticist and pro-European voices from the ministry, replacing them with large numbers of MGIMO graduates.

Mirroring Orbán's embrace of China, Fico also visited Beijing in early November. The trip, strangely, excluded Slovak journalists from participating, instead giving away seats on the government airplane to well-connected businesspeople. Just what deals were struck in China is unclear. What is known, however, is that Slovakia's relationship with China has now been upgraded to the level of a 'strategic partnership'.

Unlike Orbán, Fico is neither an original thinker nor a particularly deep one. His overwhelming interest is to preserve his coalition's grip on power and on economic resources at home. While he might be distrustful of the West - particularly the United States - he will not start a crusade to take Slovakia out of NATO or the EU. However, the behavior of the likes of Orbán, Ivanishvili and now Trump will continue to shape his own sense of what is permissible in cementing his hold on power. Whatever may have come out of Bratislava, both in terms of shocking foreign policy rhetoric and in terms of the nation's democratic decline, odds are that we have not seen the bottom yet.

The Moscow Times

IAEA must do more to stand up to Russia's attacks on nuclear power plants

Charles Digges

WHAT could have prevented the seizure of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant - Europe's largest such facility - and its continued embattlement as an effective hostage of Russia's invasion of Ukraine? Overwhelmed by Moscow's forces early in the war, the plant's six Soviet-built reactors and stores of spent nuclear fuel have now been forced to the front lines of the largest conflict on European soil since World War II. There seems to be nothing that the international community can do about it.

Awkwardly tasked with overseeing this fragile situation is the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) which, like numerous other international bodies, was caught flat-footed when Russian forces rolled not only into the Zaporizhzhia plant, but the Chernobyl exclusion zone - acts barely conceived of within the framework of international norms governing nuclear power use. The invasion has thus thrust the IAEA to the forefront of negotiations concerning nuclear safety at the Zaporizhzhia plant. Its director general, Rafael Grossi, forced to tread a mosaic of eggshells as he seeks to elicit assurances from Moscow and Kyiv not to cause a major nuclear accident as the fighting drags on.

While the IAEA has been intermittently successful in its attempts to provide a public-facing front for concern about conditions at the Zaporizhzhia plant, its existence alone is not sufficient to prevent attacks on civilian nuclear facilities. Because of this, we at Bellona argue in our new report that the international community must work to reform our common nuclear security policies to protect civilian atomic facilities from becoming the spoils of - or weapons in - international conflicts.

As it stands, the IAEA is both enabled and constrained by its diplomatic foundations. Its aegis as a UN agency gives it access to negotiations with high-level officials in both Moscow and Kyiv. It has thus been allowed by Russian authorities to place observers at the plant to report on safety conditions as the fighting continues to rage. But the agency's reliance on the support and consent of its 178 member states - including Russia - curtail its ability to levy criticism or conduct investigations that would implicate either of the warring parties in clear wrongdoing, much less prevent it.

Russia has used the agency's diplomatic constraints to its advantage. It has criticized the work of

the IAEA's onsite inspectors for refusing to endorse a pro-Russian stance, while at the same time hobbling their access to important facilities within the Zaporizhzhia complex. On some occasions, they have even accused the inspectors of espionage. Ukraine meanwhile asserts that the inspectors' reports are compromised by the restrictions imposed by Russia and that they often underreport urgent issues as a result of this tight leash. It is also worth noting that Russia makes systemic, functional, and financial contributions to the operations of the IAEA, which Putin's regime tries to use to shield itself from explicit criticism.

To be sure, Grossi has garnered support among the UN Security Council for the IAEA's Seven Pillars of Nuclear Safety and Five Principles for the Safety of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP). But the agency's defanged status and Grossi's subsequent understanding of its role as almost purely a technical support organization allow it to do little but shout from the sidelines that these principles, again and again, are being violated as the Zaporizhzhia plant seizure continues. The IAEA's current disposition tends to spare countries like Russia from the consequences of its actions that create

significant nuclear and radiation risks. This tendency is by no means unique to the IAEA, but nonetheless reflects the UN system as a whole, which, by granting certain nations veto powers within the Security Council and the General Assembly, assures that those nations are often permitted to break rules others are forced to follow without fear of repercussions.

There is a central tension within the IAEA's structure, which may prevent it from being an effective and authoritative safety mechanism: the agency is meant to promote the use of nuclear power while also overseeing its security. This conflict can prevent the agency from holding states to account for creating nuclear risks.

We therefore suggest that one way of providing the IAEA with the authority to hold malicious actors responsible for deliberately creating such risks could be to divide it into two agencies - one overseeing the promotion of nuclear science and power, the other overseeing its safe maintenance and development. Naturally, any impetus for such or any reform would have to emerge from within the international community, which must do better. The question is how. We need to start that conversation.

بیان طغی فہرست وارثان

تھیں کہ سید محمد و بیاراضی (حرم) کے نڈل غریب الیہ اللہ پادریہ پدیرہ کی پشمان مہر قبول کر کے حاف کا والد ارثیاتی
 حرم اور بیاراضی خان حرم جو ہے جسے بی۔ بی ارثیاتی (حرم) کے شری قونی وارثان۔ 1۔ محمد۔ 2۔ محمد۔ 3۔
 سارہ کے جائز حقیقی وارثان ہیں۔ کریم بیاراضی خان (حرم) کے شری قونی وارثان۔ 1۔ جال۔ 2۔ ایلہ۔ 3۔
 امر۔ 4۔ ایں۔ 5۔ 6۔ 7۔ 8۔ 9۔ 10۔ 11۔ 12۔ 13۔ 14۔ 15۔ 16۔ 17۔ 18۔ 19۔ 20۔ 21۔ 22۔ 23۔ 24۔ 25۔ 26۔ 27۔ 28۔ 29۔ 30۔ 31۔ 32۔ 33۔ 34۔ 35۔ 36۔ 37۔ 38۔ 39۔ 40۔ 41۔ 42۔ 43۔ 44۔ 45۔ 46۔ 47۔ 48۔ 49۔ 50۔ 51۔ 52۔ 53۔ 54۔ 55۔ 56۔ 57۔ 58۔ 59۔ 60۔ 61۔ 62۔ 63۔ 64۔ 65۔ 66۔ 67۔ 68۔ 69۔ 70۔ 71۔ 72۔ 73۔ 74۔ 75۔ 76۔ 77۔ 78۔ 79۔ 80۔ 81۔ 82۔ 83۔ 84۔ 85۔ 86۔ 87۔ 88۔ 89۔ 90۔ 91۔ 92۔ 93۔ 94۔ 95۔ 96۔ 97۔ 98۔ 99۔ 100۔ 101۔ 102۔ 103۔ 104۔ 105۔ 106۔ 107۔ 108۔ 109۔ 110۔ 111۔ 112۔ 113۔ 114۔ 115۔ 116۔ 117۔ 118۔ 119۔ 120۔ 121۔ 122۔ 123۔ 124۔ 125۔ 126۔ 127۔ 128۔ 129۔ 130۔ 131۔ 132۔ 133۔ 134۔ 135۔ 136۔ 137۔ 138۔ 139۔ 140۔ 141۔ 142۔ 143۔ 144۔ 145۔ 146۔ 147۔ 148۔ 149۔ 150۔ 151۔ 152۔ 153۔ 154۔ 155۔ 156۔ 157۔ 158۔ 159۔ 160۔ 161۔ 162۔ 163۔ 164۔ 165۔ 166۔ 167۔ 168۔ 169۔ 170۔ 171۔ 172۔ 173۔ 174۔ 175۔ 176۔ 177۔ 178۔ 179۔ 180۔ 181۔ 182۔ 183۔ 184۔ 185۔ 186۔ 187۔ 188۔ 189۔ 190۔ 191۔ 192۔ 193۔ 194۔ 195۔ 196۔ 197۔ 198۔ 199۔ 200۔ 201۔ 202۔ 203۔ 204۔ 205۔ 206۔ 207۔ 208۔ 209۔ 210۔ 211۔ 212۔ 213۔ 214۔ 215۔ 216۔ 217۔ 218۔ 219۔ 220۔ 221۔ 222۔ 223۔ 224۔ 225۔ 226۔ 227۔ 228۔ 229۔ 230۔ 231۔ 232۔ 233۔ 234۔ 235۔ 236۔ 237۔ 238۔ 239۔ 240۔ 241۔ 242۔ 243۔ 244۔ 245۔ 246۔ 247۔ 248۔ 249۔ 250۔ 251۔ 252۔ 253۔ 254۔ 255۔ 256۔ 257۔ 258۔ 259۔ 260۔ 261۔ 262۔ 263۔ 264۔ 265۔ 266۔ 267۔ 268۔ 269۔ 270۔ 271۔ 272۔ 273۔ 274۔ 275۔ 276۔ 277۔ 278۔ 279۔ 280۔ 281۔ 282۔ 283۔ 284۔ 285۔ 286۔ 287۔ 288۔ 289۔ 290۔ 291۔ 292۔ 293۔ 294۔ 295۔ 296۔ 297۔ 298۔ 299۔ 300۔ 301۔ 302۔ 303۔ 304۔ 305۔ 306۔ 307۔ 308۔ 309۔ 310۔ 311۔ 312۔ 313۔ 314۔ 315۔ 316۔ 317۔ 318۔ 319۔ 320۔ 321۔ 322۔ 323۔ 324۔ 325۔ 326۔ 327۔ 328۔ 329۔ 330۔ 331۔ 332۔ 333۔ 334۔ 335۔ 336۔ 337۔ 338۔ 339۔ 340۔ 341۔ 342۔ 343۔ 344۔ 345۔ 346۔ 347۔ 348۔ 349۔ 350۔ 351۔ 352۔ 353۔ 354۔ 355۔ 356۔ 357۔ 358۔ 359۔ 360۔ 361۔ 362۔ 363۔ 364۔ 365۔ 366۔ 367۔ 368۔ 369۔ 370۔ 371۔ 372۔ 373۔ 374۔ 375۔ 376۔ 377۔ 378۔ 379۔ 380۔ 381۔ 382۔ 383۔ 384۔ 385۔ 386۔ 387۔ 388۔ 389۔ 390۔ 391۔ 392۔ 393۔ 394۔ 395۔ 396۔ 397۔ 398۔ 399۔ 400۔ 401۔ 402۔ 403۔ 404۔ 405۔ 406۔ 407۔ 408۔ 409۔ 410۔ 411۔ 412۔ 413۔ 414۔ 415۔ 416۔ 417۔ 418۔ 419۔ 420۔ 421۔ 422۔ 423۔ 424۔ 425۔ 426۔ 427۔ 428۔ 429۔ 430۔ 431۔ 432۔ 433۔ 434۔ 435۔ 436۔ 437۔ 438۔ 439۔ 440۔ 441۔ 442۔ 443۔ 444۔ 445۔ 446۔ 447۔ 448۔ 449۔ 450۔ 451۔ 452۔ 453۔ 454۔ 455۔ 456۔ 457۔ 458۔ 459۔ 460۔ 461۔ 462۔ 463۔ 464۔ 465۔ 466۔ 467۔ 468۔ 469۔ 470۔ 471۔ 472۔ 473۔ 474۔ 475۔ 476۔ 477۔ 478۔ 479۔ 480۔ 481۔ 482۔ 483۔ 484۔ 485۔ 486۔ 487۔ 488۔ 489۔ 490۔ 491۔ 492۔ 493۔ 494۔ 495۔ 496۔ 497۔ 498۔ 499۔ 500۔ 501۔ 502۔ 503۔ 504۔ 505۔ 506۔ 507۔ 508۔ 509۔ 510۔ 511۔ 512۔ 513۔ 514۔ 515۔ 516۔ 517۔ 518۔ 519۔ 520۔ 521۔ 522۔ 523۔ 524۔ 525۔ 526۔ 527۔ 528۔ 529۔ 530۔ 531۔ 532۔ 533۔ 534۔ 535۔ 536۔ 537۔ 538۔ 539۔ 540۔ 541۔ 542۔ 543۔ 544۔ 545۔ 546۔ 547۔ 548۔ 549۔ 550۔ 551۔ 552۔ 553۔ 554۔ 555۔ 556۔ 557۔ 558۔ 559۔ 560۔ 561۔ 562۔ 563۔ 564۔ 565۔ 566۔ 567۔ 568۔ 569۔ 570۔ 571۔ 572۔ 573۔ 574۔ 575۔ 576۔ 577۔ 578۔ 579۔ 580۔ 581۔ 582۔ 583۔ 584۔ 585۔ 586۔ 587۔ 588۔ 589۔ 590۔ 591۔ 592۔ 593۔ 594۔ 595۔ 596۔ 597۔ 598۔ 599۔ 600۔ 601۔ 602۔ 603۔ 604۔ 605۔ 606۔ 607۔ 608۔ 609۔ 610۔ 611۔ 612۔ 613۔ 614۔ 615۔ 616۔ 617۔ 618۔ 619۔ 620۔ 621۔ 622۔ 623۔ 624۔ 625۔ 626۔ 627۔ 628۔ 629۔ 630۔ 631۔ 632۔ 633۔ 634۔ 635۔ 636۔ 637۔ 638۔ 639۔ 640۔ 641۔ 642۔ 643۔ 644۔ 645۔ 646۔ 647۔ 648۔ 649۔ 650۔ 651۔ 652۔ 653۔ 654۔ 655۔ 656۔ 657۔ 658۔ 659۔ 660۔ 661۔ 662۔ 663۔ 664۔ 665۔ 666۔ 667۔ 668۔ 669۔ 670۔ 671۔ 672۔ 673۔ 674۔ 675۔ 676۔ 677۔ 678۔ 679۔ 680۔ 681۔ 682۔ 683۔ 684۔ 685۔ 686۔ 687۔ 688۔ 689۔ 690۔ 691۔ 692۔ 693۔ 694۔ 695۔ 696۔ 697۔ 698۔ 699۔ 700۔ 701۔ 702۔ 703۔ 704۔ 705۔ 706۔ 707۔ 708۔ 709۔ 710۔ 711۔ 712۔ 713۔ 714۔ 715۔ 716۔ 717۔ 718۔ 719۔ 720۔ 721۔ 722۔ 723۔ 724۔ 725۔ 726۔ 727۔ 728۔ 729۔ 730۔ 731۔ 732۔ 733۔ 734۔ 735۔ 736۔ 737۔ 738۔ 739۔ 740۔ 741۔ 742۔ 743۔ 744۔ 745۔ 746۔ 747۔ 748۔ 749۔ 750۔ 751۔ 752۔ 753۔ 754۔ 755۔ 756۔ 757۔ 758۔ 759۔ 760۔ 761۔ 762۔ 763۔ 764۔ 765۔ 766۔ 767۔ 768۔ 769۔ 770۔ 771۔ 772۔ 773۔ 774۔ 775۔ 776۔ 777۔ 778۔ 779۔ 780۔ 781۔ 782۔ 783۔ 784۔ 785۔ 786۔ 787۔ 788۔ 789۔ 790۔ 791۔ 792۔ 793۔ 794۔ 795۔ 796۔ 797۔ 798۔ 799۔ 800۔ 801۔ 802۔ 803۔ 804

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In brief

Naqvi chairs 76th BoG meeting

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Mohsin Naqvi presided over the 76th meeting of the Board of Governors at a local hotel in Islamabad on Thursday. The BoG was briefed on the latest development regarding hosting ICC Champions Trophy 2025 in Pakistan. The members lauded Chairman PCB's firm stance regarding hosting the showpiece ICC event at home and showed their confidence on him. The members were also briefed on the stadium upgradation taking place in Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi for the upcoming mega event and the members expressed their satisfaction on the upgradation work. Also, the members expressed their delight on the ongoing Bahria Town Champions T20 Cup, taking place at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium. Earlier this year, the PCB hosted a successful Bahria Town Champions One-Day Cup in Faisalabad.

Maharaj out of Pak ODIs

CAPE TOWN (Reuters): First choice spinner Keshav Maharaj has been ruled out of the remaining two One-Day Internationals against Pakistan and is a doubt for the crucial two-test home series against the sub-continent side that starts on Dec. 26. Maharaj has a left adductor strain and will miss the 50-over fixtures in Cape Town on Thursday and Johannesburg on Sunday, but of much greater concern will be the 34-year-old's availability for the test series. South Africa are top of the World Test Championship table and need victory in one of their two remaining matches against Pakistan to guarantee a place at the Lord's final in June next year. Should Maharaj be unavailable, the only specialist spinner in the test squad is the less experienced Senuran Muthusamy. Bjorn Fortuin has been named as his replacement for the final two ODIs.

Draper out of Davis Cup

LONDON (AFP): Jack Draper confirmed Thursday he has withdrawn from both the United Cup and Great Britain's Davis Cup clash with Japan because of a hip injury. But the British number one tennis player still hopes to be fit to compete in singles competition at next month's Australian Open, which falls in between the two team events. Draper had been due to fly to Australia on Monday before partnering with Katie Boulter for Britain at the United Cup, an international mixed team tournament in Sydney starting on December 30. "As I work to get on top of my hip injury and get match-fit, I have unfortunately been advised not to play in the United Cup," said Draper in a statement on Thursday. "While we are very positive about competing in the Australian Open this year, I know I won't be able to jump straight into a packed schedule as I manage and strengthen my hip. (I'm) gutted as I was really looking forward to playing in the United Cup for the first time." The 22-year-old now plans to travel to Melbourne later this month as he bids to be fit for the first Grand Slam tournament of 2025, which starts on January 12. The injury comes at the end of a breakthrough year for Draper, who finished the 2024 season with a career-high ranking of 15 after winning his first two ATP Tour titles and also reached the US Open semi-finals.



ISLAMABAD: Secretary Ministry of IPC Irshad Kiya Nai giving Quaid-e-Azam trophy to the winning team of Punjab during closing ceremony of Quaid-e-Azam Inter-Provincial Games 2024. —INP Photo

Naqvi reviews Champions Trophy arrangements at Gaddafi Stadium

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Mohsin Naqvi, the chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), visited the Gaddafi Stadium here on Thursday to inspect the ongoing construction work ahead of the upcoming ICC Champions Trophy 2025. During his visit, he reviewed the progress and directed contractors to accelerate the upgradation work of Gaddafi Stadium to ensure its timely completion.

Mohsin Naqvi emphasized

the importance of meeting deadlines, especially with the Champions Trophy 2025 on the horizon. It's worth noting that the ICC on Thursday confirmed the hybrid model for the Champions Trophy 2025, with India playing their matches at a neutral venue.

Earlier today, a report from ESPNcricinfo revealed that the hybrid model has received approval for the entire ICC event cycle spanning from 2024 to 2027.

The ICC has now official-

ly confirmed the development through a press release. "ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025 to be played across Pakistan and a neutral venue," the apex cricket body announced.

"India and Pakistan matches hosted by either country at ICC Events during the 2024-2027 rights cycle will be played at a neutral venue, the ICC Board confirmed on Thursday, 19 December."

"This will apply to the upcoming ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025

(hosted by Pakistan), set to be played in February and March 2025, as well as the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2025 (hosted by India) and the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 (hosted by India and Sri Lanka)."

The ICC also confirmed that Pakistan will host the ICC Women's T20 World Cup in 2028, the first event of the next event cycle. Similar to the current cycle, India will not travel to Pakistan for the 2028 event.

Bottas returns to Mercedes as reserve driver

PARIS (AFP): Valtteri Bottas will return to Mercedes next season as a reserve driver in the wake of Mick Schumacher's decision to leave, the constructor announced Thursday.

"Returning home to the Mercedes family as third driver for 2025 is what's next and I couldn't be more pleased," said the 35-year-old Finn who was not retained by Sauber ahead of their takeover by Audi.

"I want to thank Toto (Wolff), the team at Brackley, and everyone at the three-pointed star for welcoming me back with open arms." Bottas won 10 Grands Prix during his five years at Mercedes alongside Lewis Hamilton from 2017 to 2021. "Despite the challenges of the past few years, I know that I've still got so much more to contribute to F1," he continued.

"As I return to the place where so many of those moments were achieved, I'm looking forward to using all the knowledge I've gained to help the team to perform and progress towards our goal of fighting for world championships." Bottas experienced three difficult seasons in the Alfa-Romeo team, renamed Sauber, finishing tenth in the drivers' standings in 2022, 15th in 2023, and 22nd with no points last season.

Mercedes will change their line-up next year following seven-time champion Hamilton's switch to Ferrari -- George Russell will remain with Italian teenager Andrea Kimi Antonelli replacing Hamilton.

"Welcome home, Valtteri!" said Wolff. "It's great to have you back." Wolff praised Bottas' "immense impact and contribution" in his five years with the team.

Nurpur Lions beat Lake City Panthers in crucial match

RAWALPINDI (APP): Nurpur Lions paceman Shahid Aziz successfully defended 16 runs to give his team an eight-run win over Lake City Panthers in the Bahria Town Champions T20 Cup crucial match at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium on Thursday.

Lake City Panthers, set 161 to win, finished on 152-6 in their allotted overs with Danish Aziz scoring an unbeaten 38 off 27 balls with five boundaries. Opener Umar Siddiq scored a 28-ball 38, hitting one six and four boundaries.

Sajid Khan struck two sixes in his eight-ball 17 while Amad Butt scored an unbeaten 13-ball 16 but those were not enough. For Lions, spinner Sharoon Siraj bagged three wickets for 19.

The victory gives Nurpur Lions eight points from seven matches and a better net run-rate lifts them to second. UMT Markhors are top of the table with 10 points while ABL Stallions are third with eight points.

The defeat leaves Lake City Panthers on fourth with six points while Engro Dolphins are pointless with six defeats in as many matches.

Sent into bat, Nurpur Lions had a solid start with Imam-ul-Haq and Hasan Nawaz putting 85 in 7.2 overs. Imam cracked eight boundaries and a six in his 36-ball 57 while Hasan's 22-ball 41 were spiced with three sixes and four boundaries. But once Nawaz fell to spinner Sajid Khan the innings fell apart.

Nurpur Lions slumped

from 110-1 to 160 all out with four balls of the stipulated 20 overs remaining unused.

Shahzaib Khan 16 and Khushdil Shah with 13 were the other batters with double figures. Leg-spinner Usama Mir returned with figures of 4-23 in his four overs while pacer Mohammad Wasim Jnr took 2-22.

Scores in brief: Nurpur Lions beat Lake City Panthers by eight runs. Nurpur Lions 160 all out in 19.2 overs (Imam-ul-Haq 57, Hasan Nawaz 41, Shahzaib Khan 16; Usama Mir 4-23, Mohammad Wasim Jnr 2-22).

Lake City Panthers 152-6 in 20 overs (Danish Aziz 38 not out, Umar Siddiq 38; Sharon Siraj 3-19).

Player of the match - Sharoon Siraj.



RAWALPINDI: Mubasir Khan in action during the Pakistan Champions T20 Cup 2024-25 match between Panthers vs Lions at Pindi Cricket Stadium.

Rashford leaving Man Utd could do 'world of good' - Keane

LONDON (AFP): Roy Keane believes leaving Manchester United could do Marcus Rashford the "world of good" as he fears the forward will never regain his hunger at Old Trafford.

Rashford's future appears to be in the balance after the 27-year-old, a product of United's youth system, was left out of the Manchester derby.

United won 2-1 at Manchester City on Sunday, with Rashford telling journalist Henry Winter on Tuesday that he was "ready for a new challenge and the next steps".

"I don't mind what he said. I think it's spot on," former United captain Keane told the Stick to Football podcast.

"Sometimes a deal just works for everybody. It's been going on for a year or two now, there's obviously a bit of talent in there, he's been at the club since he was a kid."

"A change would probably do him the world of good, for him and his team and his family. Just go and play, maybe go

abroad or whatever it might be."

Rashford's current contract at Old Trafford runs until 2028 and although he has been linked to several other clubs, United manager Ruben Amorim is keen for the England forward to stay.

But Keane said: "I always think if you lose that hunger, it is hard to get it back."

"Forget about the few bob (pounds) he's earned over the years -- and listen, good for him -- but we know, the great players, it's nothing to do with that."

Keane added that leaving United could revive Rashford's "real hunger" for on-field success.

"I think there's a good chance he might get it back with a change of a club and scenery, a new country, a new league, whatever, but I don't think he'll get it back at United."

Amorim, talking to reporters ahead of Thursday's League Cup quarter-final at Tottenham, urged Rashford to "speak with

the manager" rather than air his grievances publicly.

Rashford has scored 138 goals in 426 appearances for the club since making his senior debut in 2016.

However, he has lost form over the last 18 months with United and was also axed from England's Euro 2024 squad.

Rashford has scored just 15 goals in 67 appearances since signing a lucrative new contract 18 months ago, with speculation over his future increasing in recent days.

The forward, who was absent from training on Monday through illness, is set to miss the League Cup quarter-final at Spurs. Amorim is keen to keep Rashford but he admitted he would have handled the situation differently when he was a player.

"If this was me, probably I will speak with the manager," he told reporters on Wednesday. "But, guys, let's focus on Tottenham. Tottenham is the most important thing."



RIYADH (AFP): Tyson Fury will be fighting for his legacy and revenge as well as three heavyweight belts in his rematch against the superlative Oleksandr Usyk on Saturday.

The unpredictable Englishman suffered his first career defeat in May when Usyk won by split decision to become the first undisputed champion of the four-belt era.

Bookmakers and many neutral commentators favour the unbeaten Ukrainian, widely deemed the best pound-for-pound fighter, as they return to Riyadh's Kingdom Arena seven months on.

Although the scoring was tight, in the ninth round Fury needed the ropes to keep him upright and was saved by the bell after a standing eight count.

Only three belts are now on the line as Usyk, committed to the lucrative rematch, vacated his IBF title rather than face mandatory challenger Daniel Dubois.

Fury, now 36, had gone 35 bouts unbeaten before facing Usyk, despite a rollercoaster career when he has struggled with depression, substance abuse and ballooning weight.

His preparations for the first unification clash in a

generation were chaotic, after a cut in training forced a three-month postponement and reduced his ability to spar.

In the final build-up his father, John, headbutted a member of Usyk's entourage, and it was later revealed that Fury's wife, Paris, suffered a miscarriage on the fight's eve.

The "Gypsy King" has been more focused this time around and locked himself away in a three-month training camp in Malta when he says he did not speak to Paris or his children. On Thursday, he refused to perform for the cameras at an open training session held under the gaze of a fake Sphinx at Riyadh's Boulevard World theme park.

Wearing a hoody, leather jacket and a big, bushy beard, Fury strolled round the ring, laced up his gloves, took them off again and then fired some monosyllabic threats. "A lot of pain," he said of Saturday's fight. "Smash and damage." "A lot of hurt," continued the Mancunian, ignoring the interviewer's questions. "Hurt, serious hurt. A lot of damage."

'Comfortable' Usyk Usyk, by contrast, was smiling and exuberant, dancing and shadow boxing as pop star Artem Pivovarov, dangling from a

lighting rig, belted out a Ukrainian hit. "The first fight is in the past," said the 37-year-old, adding that he felt "good, very comfortable in boxing and training".

Fury, the former WBC champion, needs to beat Usyk on Saturday to set up a trilogy fight and gloss over the one blemish on his career. He has taken heart from his strong record in rematches, after knocking out both Derek Chisora and Deontay Wilder in their trilogy bouts.

However, he could not encounter a tougher foe than Usyk, a former Olympic gold-medallist and undisputed cruiser-weight champion whose record stands at 22-0.

While the Ukrainian southpaw gives up six inches in height and a big weight advantage to Fury, his footwork, speed and prodigious fitness have allowed him to prosper since stepping up to heavyweight.

In the top division, Usyk beat Chisora and twice overcame the towering Anthony Joshua, claiming his IBF, IBO and WBO belts, before knocking out Dubois and ending Fury's unbeaten record.

British media have reported an increased prize purse of £150 million (\$190 million), with Usyk expected to receive the lion's share -- unlike in May, when Fury was said to have banked 70 percent.

Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest oil exporter, is investing heavily in sport to raise its profile, prompting regular accusations of "sportswashing", or using sport to distract from its human rights record.



CAPE TOWN: Mohammad Rizwan and Babar Azam added 115 for the third wicket, South Africa vs Pakistan, 2nd ODI



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq in a group photo with Deputy Speaker National Assembly, Speakers of Provincial Assemblies, legislators at Parliament House.

Speaker PA calls for dialogue to maintain national unity

ISLAMABAD (APP): Malik Ahmad Khan, Speaker of the Punjab Assembly, on Thursday, expressed concern about the shift toward regional politics and stressed the need for constructive dialogue to maintain national unity.

"To keep the country united, dialogue is imperative," he emphasised, urging leaders to prioritise collaboration over division.

He lauded the efforts of National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq for hosting the historic 18th

Speakers' Conference, describing it as a milestone in addressing constitutional and legal challenges.

In his address, Malik Ahmad Khan congratulated Sardar Ayaz Sadiq on the successful organisation of the event, calling it a gathering of national importance.

"This conference is a testament to our commitment to upholding the rule of law," he said.

He highlighted the purpose of the conference, which is to resolve constitutional and legal complexities

through collective dialogue.

"The first consensus Constitution of Pakistan was a landmark moment in our history, and the 18th Amendment remains a pivotal chapter in our political evolution," he noted.

Calling Sardar Ayaz Sadiq an experienced and visionary leader, Malik Ahmad Khan concluded with a call to action, urging participants to work toward strengthening democratic principles and fostering unity across the country.

PML-N for comprehensive social media regulations

ISLAMABAD (APP): PML-N Senator Talal Chaudhry Thursday reaffirmed the government's dedication to protecting freedom of expression, while also highlighting the urgent need for robust social media regulations which aims to strike a delicate balance between promoting open discourse and safeguarding citizens from the harmful effects of misinformation.

Talking to private news channel, PML-N Senator Talal Chaudhry said that Government was taking concrete steps to address this pressing concern and pledged to resolve complaints within the coming days.

Talal Chaudhry also emphasized that the party will not tolerate cyber crimes and defamation of state institutions through social media platforms.

By regulating social media and preventing its misuse, the PML-N aims to create a safer and more respectful online environment, where freedom of expression can thrive without compromising national interests or individual rights,

he added. Responding to a question, Talal Chaudhry emphasized that the government makes all major decisions in consultation with its allies, upholding the principles of democratic governance. "We believe in democratic practices and negotiation to resolve issues, ensuring that all stakeholders are on board and their concerns are addressed," he added.

Parliamentary Secretary said that displacement of Kashmiri population from Kashmir was a major issue, and highlighted that more than 50,000 Kashmiris had been displaced, citing a report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

He criticized the Modi-led fascist Indian government for abrogating Articles 370 and 35A and

'Kashmiris facing worst human rights abuses in IIOJK': Barrister Daniyal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Parliamentary Secretary for Information and Broadcasting Barrister Daniyal Chaudhry on Thursday emphasised Pakistan's steadfast solidarity with the people of Kashmir and reaffirmed the nation's commitment to a just and lasting solution.

He was addressing a seminar titled 'Kashmir Conflict: Human Rights Challenges' as a Chief Guest, organized by Directorate of External Linkages & All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) at Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad under the chairmanship of Convener Ghulam Mohammad Safi.

Barrister Daniyal said, "We stand by our Kashmiri brethren," adding no effort will be spared to expose the atrocities of Indian forces against the Kashmiri people.

Paying tribute to the sacrifices of the Kashmiri people, he said, that the Kashmiris have rendered matchless sacrifices for their freedom struggle and their sacrifices will never go in vain. He also condemned the media blackouts, restrictions on freedom of expression, and repeated curfews, noting that IIOJK had experienced over 418 complete media blackouts in recent years.

Barrister Daniyal said

said it was a move to alter the region's demography by settling non-Kashmiris in the territory. After this move, the Government of India began to erode the Muslim identity of the state by illegally and unconstitutionally granting domicile of Kashmir to non-state residents. "Over 25,000 domiciles have been issued to non-Kashmiris, violating Article 49 of the Geneva Convention," Barrister Daniyal added.

The Modi government committing widespread human rights abuses in IIOJK, including extrajudicial killings, mass detentions, forced resettlements, torturing and rape. The human rights watchdogs and international community are playing the role of a mute spectators even after seeing all this, he added.

High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

He criticized the Modi-led fascist Indian government for abrogating Articles 370 and 35A and

that Kashmir issue was raised on every international forum including UK Parliament and European Union. "We will continue to raise the Kashmir issue at every international forum," he added.

He urged the United Nations (UN) and international human rights organizations to take notice of Indian atrocities on Kashmiris and play their role in resolution of Kashmir issue according to the resolutions of UN. A two minutes video highlighting the significance of Kashmir issue and the atrocities perpetrated by the Indian security forces was screened during the seminar.

The seminar was attended widely by students and faculty members, and notable speakers Dr. Hafizur Rehman, Abdul Majid Khan, Finance Minister of Azad Kashmir, Prof. Dr. Shabana Fayaz, Prof. Dr. Salma Malik, Secretary General Pervez Ahmed and others.

Hurriyat leaders, Madam Shamim Shaal, Shaheen Iqbal Chaudhry, Manzoor Ahmad Shah, Intiaz Wani, Mian Muzaffar, Muhammad Ashraf Dar, Zahid Safi, Zahid Ashraf, Zahid Mujtaba Manzoor Ahmad Dar and others also attended.

Azerbaijan's restoration of Shusha highlights need to protect Islamic heritage

ISLAMABAD (APP): The restoration of Shusha, a historic cultural hub, stands as a powerful example of preserving Islamic heritage amidst global challenges.

A seminar held here recently celebrated Shusha's recognition as the Cultural Capital of the Islamic World for 2024, emphasizing its significance and the shared responsibility of the Muslim world to protect its rich heritage.

The MUSLIM Institute, in collaboration with the Embassy of Azerbaijan, organized a seminar titled "Shusha - Cultural Capital of the Islamic World for 2024: A Testament to the Muslim World's Rich Heritage" here at the National Library of Pakistan.

The event gathered prominent speakers, including Ambassador Masood Khan, former President of Azad Jammu & Kashmir; Sahibzada Sultan Ahmed Ali, Chairman of the MUSLIM Institute; Khazar Farhadov, Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan; and Alisher Tokhtaev, Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Pakistan.

Azerbaijan Ambassador Khazar Farhadov highlighted the cultural, historical, and spiritual importance of Shusha, a city in Azerbaijan that has been a beacon of artistic and intellectual achievements for centuries. Declared the Cultural Capital of the Islamic World by the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO), Shusha symbolizes the resilience and vitality of



Muslim heritage.

Ambassador said the Shusha had long served as a center for poets, architects, scholars, and musicians. Despite suffering extensive damage during the Armenian occupation, Azerbaijan successfully liberated the city on November 8, 2020, following a 44-day Patriotic War. In January 2021, Azerbaijan's President declared Shusha the cultural capital of the country, marking a significant milestone in its restoration journey.

Khazar said restoration of Shusha is seen as a restoration of historical justice for Azerbaijan. Efforts to rebuild the city's historical and cultural identity were commended during the seminar. These efforts not only preserve the city's rich heritage but also serve as an inspiration for the broader Muslim world, particularly as Islamic heritage

faces threats globally.

Speakers highlighted ongoing challenges to Islamic cultural heritage. In South Asia, repressive policies such as Hindutva pose threats to Muslim heritage in India. Meanwhile, in Palestine, sacred sites are at risk due to occupation and apartheid policies. Across the Middle East, conflicts and civil wars continue to endanger centuries-old Islamic monuments and traditions.

Against this backdrop, Shusha's restoration stands out as a beacon of hope. Azerbaijan's commitment to reviving Shusha's cultural and religious significance offers a model for other nations. The speakers stressed the importance of collective efforts by Muslim countries to preserve their shared heritage, promote cultural exchange, and ensure that future generations can connect with

their history.

The seminar also explored the role of cultural preservation in promoting peace and stability. Shusha's legacy serves as a reminder of the power of cultural identity to inspire unity and cooperation. Speakers emphasized that safeguarding Islamic heritage is a shared responsibility, requiring collaboration and determination from the global Muslim community.

Discussions at the event also delved into the decades of challenges faced by Shusha during the Armenian occupation. The city suffered immense damage, but Azerbaijan's efforts have ensured its revival. This achievement carries symbolic significance, not only for Azerbaijan but for the entire Islamic world.

The seminar brought together diplomats, academics, and cultural enthusiasts, creating a platform to reflect on the importance of Shusha in preserving Islamic heritage. Participants agreed that cultural restoration efforts like those in Shusha play a crucial role in inspiring future generations and fostering mutual understanding across borders.

In conclusion, the event underscored the shared responsibility of the Muslim world to protect its cultural identity. The restoration of Shusha serves as a powerful example of resilience and dedication to preserving history, offering hope in the face of global challenges to Islamic heritage.

IRSA releases 78,700 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 78,700 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 38,900 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1472.95 feet and was 74.95 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 16,800 cusecs and 36,000 cusecs respectively.

The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1136.75 feet, which was 86.75 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 4,400 cusecs and 25,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 50,900, 31,100, 32,400 and 2,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 12,400 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 1,700 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

4 gamblers arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Taxila Police on Thursday arrested four accused red handed gambling on cards, a Rawalpindi Police spokesman said.

The stake money of Rs 41,200, four mobile phones and playing cards were recovered for the arrested accused Arsalan, Chengiz, Shaukat and Irfan.

Installation of girders on longest Soan Bridge begins

RAWALPINDI (APP): The installation of the girders on the longest Soan Bridge under Rawalpindi Ring Road project has officially commenced, marking a critical milestone in this significant infrastructure initiative aimed at easing traffic congestion in Rawalpindi.

Inaugurating the installation of the girders on the Soan Bridge, Director General (DG), Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA), Kinza Murtaza on Thursday said this development marks a major achievement in the construction of the multi-lane highway, which aims to reduce traffic congestion and boost regional connectivity.

The launch event was attended by key officials from RDA, and other stakeholders involved in the ambitious Ring Road project. The Soan Bridge girder, which spans over the Soan River, is a crucial component in completing this vital infrastructure project.

"The completion of this girder is an important step forward in the Ring Road Rawalpindi Project," said DG RD adding, "Once finished, the Ring Road will not only alleviate traffic congestion in Rawalpindi but will also provide a safer, more efficient route for travelers across the region."

The DG directed the officers concerned for timely and efficient completion of the work. She emphasized that the project must meet all deadlines set in the timeline.

"However, there will be no compromise on the quality and standard of the work. We are committed to ensuring that the flyovers are built to the highest standards for the safety and convenience of the public," she added.

Rawalpindi Ring Road project, a flagship initiative by RDA, is set to enhance the city's transportation network by connecting various major roads, highways, and industrial areas.

The project will provide an alternative route to the already congested city center, helping reduce travel times and improve traffic flow, she said.

RDA is working in collaboration to ensure the project progresses smoothly and that safety protocols are strictly followed during the construction phase.

With the completion of the Soan Bridge girder, the project is on the track for completion in the coming months, significantly benefiting Rawalpindi's infrastructure and contributing to regional economic development.

ANF seizes over 348 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 8 operations across the country managed to recover over 348 kg drugs worth Rs 56.3 million and three suspects were arrested, said an ANF spokesman here on Thursday.

He informed that 5.4 kg ice was recovered from a parcel booked for the Netherlands near Shahabpura Railway Gate in Sialkot and an accused was arrested.

500 grams heroin was recovered from a parcel containing ladies' clothes booked for the UK at GPO Lahore.

54 grams chemical material was recovered from a parcel booked for the UK through a courier office in Rawalpindi.

156.8 kg hashish hidden for smuggling was recovered from Qilla Abdullah in Balochistan.

In 5th operation, 90 kg opium and 7 kg ice were recovered from an uninhabited area of Chagai district in Balochistan.

In 6th operation, 18 kg opium and 6 kg heroin were recovered from Winder area of Hub in Balochistan.

In 7th operation, 60 kg hashish was recovered from Coastal Line Pasi in Balochistan.

5 kg ice hidden in a car near Sahu Chowk Multan was recovered and 2 suspects were arrested.

Cases have been registered against the arrested suspects under the Narcotics Control Act and further investigations are under process.

Police recover 480 liquor bottles

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi district police in an operation managed to recover 480 bottles of liquor, said a police spokesman.

He informed that Kallar Syedan police acting on a tip-off launched an operation and signaled a suspicious vehicle to stop at a checkpoint but, the accused managed to escape from the scene. When the police chased the vehicle, the accused leaving the vehicle in a forest fled.

During search of the vehicle, police recovered 480 bottles of liquor. Superintendent of Police, Saddar, Muhammad Nabil Khokhar said that raids are being conducted to arrest the accused. He informed that the police officers were directed to launch an operation against drug dealers and liquor suppliers.

Pakistan takes steps to speed up justice with mediation training

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan is moving forward with efforts to improve its justice system by promoting mediation as an alternative to lengthy court procedures with a 20 million grant from the European Union.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has teamed up with the Federal Judicial Academy (FJA) to train judges in mediation, aiming to reduce the country's massive case backlog and make justice more accessible.

The initiative, supported by the European Union (EU) through the 20 million 'Deliver Justice Programme,' involves a week-long training workshop for 24 judges from high courts and district courts across the country, eight of whom are women.

This workshop, led by experts from the Singapore International Mediation Centre (SIMC), aims to equip judges with the skills needed to promote mediation in civil and commercial cases.

Mediation, a process where an impartial third party helps resolve disputes without going to court, is seen as a key strategy to reduce the backlog of cases in Pakistan's judicial system. According to a 2022 report, there are over 2.1 million cases waiting to be resolved, including nearly 52,000

in the Supreme Court and 1.75 million in district courts.

Pakistan's judicial system is under significant strain, with a massive case backlog affecting the timely delivery of justice. Mediation is being presented as an effective and cost-efficient way to ease the pressure on courts. By resolving disputes outside of the traditional court system, mediation can help reduce the number of cases that need to be heard in court, speeding up the overall process of justice.

Supreme Court Justice Mansoor Ali Shah emphasized the importance of alternative dispute resolution, stating that mediation is "the future of Pakistan" and could significantly reduce case pendency. He highlighted the Court-annexed Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) model as a safe and effective way to start promoting mediation across the country.

The collaboration between the EU, UNDP, and the FJA represents a major effort to introduce mediation as a standard practice in Pakistan's courts.

As part of this initiative, the EU has already supported the establishment of court-annexed mediation centers in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

These centers are designed to provide a platform for resolving disputes quickly and affordably.

Jeroen Willems, Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation to Pakistan, noted that the EU is committed to helping Pakistan reduce its case backlog and improve access to justice. He pointed to the successful pilot projects in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as examples of how mediation can improve the judicial process. He also highlighted that similar investments in other countries have led to faster case resolutions and greater access to justice.

The role of mediation in dispute resolution is further underscored by Chuan Wee Meng, CEO of the Singapore International Mediation Centre.

He emphasized that mediation not only reduces the burden on the judicial system but also helps preserve relationships between parties involved in a dispute. According to Meng, the training workshop marks an important step toward ensuring that justice is delivered in a timely and cost-effective manner.

This initiative is already showing positive results in some regions of Pakistan. Under the



EU-funded 'Deliver Justice Programme,' five mediation centers have been rebuilt in Balochistan, in the districts of Pishin, Hub, Khuzdar, Loralai, and Sariab. The newly renovated Sariab Mediation Centre has already handled more than 40 cases, primarily related to domestic disputes, with an average resolution time of 2 to 3 weeks per case. Similarly, the Pishin Mediation Centre settled 61 cases in its first 25 days of operation.

Hayat Ali Shah, Director General of the FJA, emphasized that the training of judges in mediation is an essential part of improving the justice system in

Pakistan. He expressed gratitude to the EU and UNDP for their continued support in this important initiative.

Looking ahead, the EU-funded program will see the construction of three more mediation centers in the districts of Zhob, Uthal, and Ziarat in Balochistan in 2025. These efforts are expected to further expand the reach of mediation services in the region, providing more opportunities for people to resolve disputes outside of traditional courtrooms.

Van Nguyen, Deputy Resident Representative of UNDP Pakistan, expressed hope

that the collaboration between UNDP, FJA, and the EU will help alleviate the burden on Pakistan's courts. She pointed out that mediation could offer a more dignified, accessible, and timely path to justice for many citizens. By training judges and establishing mediation centers across the country, Pakistan is laying the foundation for a more efficient and accessible justice system. The ongoing support from international partners like the EU and UNDP is crucial to ensuring that these efforts succeed in providing quicker and more affordable justice to people across Pakistan.

Afghanistan crush Zimbabwe by 232 runs

HARARE (Ariana News): Afghanistan defeated Zimbabwe by 232 runs in the second ODI on Thursday to secure a 1-0 lead in the three-match series. Sent to bat first by Zimbabwe who won the toss, Afghanistan posted 286-6 in Harare. Sediqullah Atal scored 104, his first hundred in an international match. Abdul Malik followed with 84. In reply, Zimbabwe scored 54 runs before being bowled out in the 17.5 overs.

182 million AFN invested in development projects

GHAZNI (BNA): The Directorate of Rural Rehabilitation and Development in Ghazni has announced the completion of 334 projects since the beginning of the current year, with financial support from international organizations. These projects were implemented at a cost of 182.33 million afghanis. Engineer Noor Habib Noor, General Manager of Engineering Services at the Directorate, told Bakhtar News Agency that the projects include drinking water supply networks.

Anas Haqqani: US's divisive policies in Afghanistan have failed



KABUL (TOLONews): Anas Haqqani, a senior member of the Islamic Emirate, stated that the United States used divisive policies over the past two decades to achieve its

objectives in Afghanistan.

In an interview with Al-Arabiya, the senior member of the Islamic Emirate remarked that the US has now failed to sow discord and create divisions among

Afghan citizens. Anas Haqqani said: "These words refer to events from 24 years ago when the Americans first came to Afghanistan. They employed various methods. Now that no other options remain, they are trying to test approaches aimed at creating division and pressuring people. However, this is not possible, and thankfully, such attempts have not succeeded."

He further stated that differences in perspective among officials of the Islamic Emirate are normal and emphasized that they do not want these differences to escalate into conflicts.

Anas Haqqani said: "There is a difference between disagreement and differing opinions, and this is a natural phenomenon. We do not want these differences in views to turn into conflicts because Afghanistan has suffered from divisions. We witnessed what happened after the victory of the Mujahideen. They defeated the Communists and the Soviets but could not establish a government due to the existence of multiple factions."

Haqqani also pointed out that Daesh deceives young people in Islamic

countries and seeks to challenge the security that exists in Afghanistan.

He stated: "This group, which calls itself the founders of the Islamic Caliphate, uses such methods to deceive people and the youth of Islamic nations. Through these actions, they aim to portray Afghanistan as insecure."

In his remarks, the senior member of the Islamic Emirate emphasized that major economic projects and global engagement are now taking shape, which is concerning for Daesh and others who oppose stability in Afghanistan.

Stanikzai and Kyrgyz envoy discuss economic cooperation



KABUL (BNA): The Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs, Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanekzai, held a meeting with Danyar Zhoolchiev, the acting head of the Kyrgyz Embassy in Kabul.

In a statement released today, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that discussions focused on strengthening bilateral political, economic, and trade relations between Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan.

Alhaj Stanekzai emphasized that enhancing Kyrgyzstan's political and economic ties with Afghanistan is a crucial step toward the economic growth of both countries. Additionally, Zhoolchiev highlighted Kyrgyzstan's interest in investing in Afghanistan's mining and agricultural sectors, among others, and expressed eagerness to strengthen and accelerate bilateral political and economic cooperation.

He also mentioned an upcoming visit by senior Kyrgyz officials to Kabul in the near future.

Over 1.2 million Afghan migrants return from Iran: IOM

KABUL (TOLONews): Coinciding with December 18, International Migrants Day, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has reported that more than 1.2 million Afghan migrants returned to Afghanistan from Pakistan and Iran in 2024.

According to the organization's statistics, over 1.1 million people returned from Iran, 80,500 from Pakistan, and 100,000 entered Afghanistan by air. The IOM report stated: "This year, IOM response teams have recorded more than 1.2 million undocumented migrants returning to Afghanistan through four border crossings with Pakistan and Iran, and another 100,000 people arriving at Kabul airport. Of the approximate 80,500 individuals who returned from Pakistan, most indicated that they came back due to the struggle to secure sustainable incomes and Pakistan's policies on the expulsion of undocumented migrants."

On the other hand, migrants deported from other countries have complained about the mistreatment of undocumented migrants by host countries. Matuillah, who migrated to Iran four years ago due to unemployment and was deported for lacking residency documents, told TOLONews: "The treatment of Iranian forces is aimed at improving their own country, and they impose stricter restrictions on Afghan migrants."

Some Afghan migrants living in neighboring countries have called on host nations to provide the basic facilities and rights that migrants are entitled to.

Malik Mujahid Shinwari, an Afghan migrant in Pakistan, said: "On International Migrants Day, we call on Pakistan to treat Afghans with the kindness of a Muslim brother."

Asifa Stanekzai, an advocate for migrant rights, highlighted improving migrant conditions, stating: "Diplomatic dialogues between Afghanistan and host countries should take place regarding migrants so that those living in uncertainty without residency documents can have their situations addressed promptly."

Antonio Guterres, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, stated on International Migrants Day that this day serves as an opportunity to reflect on challenges such as prejudice, discrimination, violence, exploitation, and the unimaginable cruelty of human trafficking that migrants face.

The European Union also expressed its support for Afghan migrants, internally displaced persons, and returnees, pledging assistance in areas such as education, employment, and improving their economic situation.

Abdul Basit Ansari, a migration expert, told TOLONews: "International organizations, particularly UNHCR and other entities working to improve the conditions of migrants, have a greater responsibility in this regard. They need to act and engage with host countries to ensure we see tangible improvements in the situation of our migrants."

Travel prices lower since start of Kabul-Doha direct flights



KABUL (TOLONews): Direct flights from Kabul to Doha and vice versa have been launched by Kam Air. During the inauguration ceremony, the officials of this airline said that this initiative has facilitated travel for passengers on both sides.

According to Kam Air officials, the airline will conduct three weekly flights between Kabul and Doha. Jahed Azimi, the CEO of Kam Air, told TOLONews: "An agreement was signed, and based on that, we

launched the first flight. These flights provide ease for our passengers and Afghan citizens working in Qatar, as traveling to Afghanistan was previously challenging for them."

Passengers also consider the launch of direct Kabul-Doha flights significant for saving time. They say that they used to travel via Dubai to reach Doha, which not only consumed time but also cost between \$800 and \$900 per ticket. However, the direct flights from Kabul

to Doha have now eased the process for them.

Muzaffar Babakarkhil, a businessman, told TOLONews: "Previously, we faced many challenges. We used to travel either through Dubai or Kuwait to reach Doha. Now we are happy that we don't waste time and can travel directly to Doha."

Shukrullah Helmandi, another passenger, said: "Previously, we used to travel through foreign airlines via Dubai, and the ticket cost \$900. Now we are happy to fly with an

Afghan airline for \$425."

After the first Kam Air flight landed at Doha Airport, a brief inauguration program for the direct flights was held with the participation of officials from the airports of both countries, the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation of Afghanistan, and officials from the Afghan embassy in Qatar.

Mohammad Naeem, acting head of the Islamic Emirate's embassy in Qatar, said regarding these flights: "We hope this will be effective in the realm of trade. This [launch of direct flights] is a significant development and good news for our people."

According to the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation, Afghanistan currently has direct flights to ten neighboring and regional countries. The launch of direct and transit flights to Qatar is expected to provide further ease for travelers.

3,000 children, teenagers work in Nangarhar brick kilns



JALALABAD (Pajhwok): The Labour and Social Affairs Department of Nangarhar says 6,000 people are working in brick kilns, half of them children and teenagers in the Surkh Rod district of the eastern province.

However, the department says, it is making efforts to save children from hard labour in Jalalabad, the provincial capital, and different districts.

Most of children are engaged in hard labour in Jalalabad, Torkham town and Surkh Rod, but the officials concerned assure they have initiated programmes for saving them from heavy work.

Family members say their children are doing hard labour due to poverty. About 48 brick kilns

are functioning in Surkh Rod, employing 6,000 people — half of them children and teenagers. Some girl children are also working in these brick kilns. One of them, Salma, 10, makes clay bricks with her small hands in the harsh winter.

Khan Mohammad, Salma's father, is suffering from bone rheumatism and cannot work with his crippled hands and feet. He said if a small business was set up for him, he would never send his little daughter to work.

In some parts of Jalalabad, children are engaged as trainees with auto mechanics, carpenters and tinsmith, besides doing other forms of hard labour due to economic hardships.

Inamullah, less than 10 years old, said his elderly father was unable to meet family needs, so he is forced into hard labour.

Meanwhile, Labour and Social Affairs Department officials acknowledged a large number of children were working in brick kilns in the province.

Faridoun Haqqani, director of the department, said they had provided education for hundreds of children in cooperation with charities and aid agencies in Torkham. The official said families of such children were being financially supported to stop them sending their children to work.

He added they had also arranged for children and teenagers vocational training courses in Jalalabad in order to save them from hard labour. The director explained his department had conducted a survey on brick kilns in Surkh Rod district. Around 5,879 people are working in 48 kilns there, 50 percent of them children and teenagers.

He said they were in discussion with charitable organisations to provide such children with education and the families with financial support.

Herat hospital struggling to deal with patient load

HERAT (Ariana News): Herat Regional Hospital has a capacity to treat about 1,000 patients a day, 650 as in-patients. However, the hospital is being stretched to its limits and is treating more than double this number of people every day, hospital officials say.

Officials say that in most wards, there are two patients per bed. They say the hospital needs to expand - that they urgently need more space and more equipment. According to doctors, the High Care Unit has only 10 beds, when it actually needs at least 65. In addition, they say the dialysis department is only running at half-mast. It has 17 dialysis machines, but only eight are in working order.

Herat residents have also raised concern over the state of the hospital and said some departments, especially the dialysis unit and pediatrics urgently need equipment and additional space. Afghanistan is grappling with significant health challenges marked by a fragile healthcare system and unequal access to services, particularly in rural areas.

After news reports, 20 Helmand schools to get buildings



L A S H K A R G A H (Pajhwok): The Education Department in southern Helmand province says construction work has been started on buildings for 20 schools in 18 districts of the province after Pajhwok reports.

Following continuous reports by Pajhwok, Afghan News about the shortage of school buildings in Helmand, and after highlighting the issues faced by local people

and students, officials from the province's Department of Education say that construction work has been launched on buildings for 20 schools, which will be completed soon.

In an exclusive interview with Pajhwok, Director of Education of Helmand, Maulvi Mohammad Awaz Ansari, said: "After Pajhwok's reports, construction work on buildings for 20

schools in 18 districts of the province, supported by UNICEF, has been started, and 80 percent of the work has been completed, with the remaining work to be completed soon."

He added construction of buildings for 20 schools in Helmand was not enough and said that support should also be provided for 190 other schools, some of which do not have buildings, and others need renovation.

According to him, currently 90 percent of children in the province have access to education, and efforts are underway to provide education opportunities for the remaining 10 percent. It is worth mentioning that there are currently 450 active schools in Helmand, imparting education to approximately 190,000 students.

Two years since Taliban banned women from universities: Dreams dashed, futures on hold

KABUL (Amu Tv): Two years have passed since the Taliban banned women and girls from pursuing higher education, a prohibition that has come to symbolize the group's systemic repression of women.

On December 20, 2022, the Taliban's Ministry of Higher Education announced that women would be barred from attending public and private universities "until further notice," citing a decision made by the group's cabinet. For many women, the day has since been known as a "black day," marking the abrupt end of their educational ambitions.

Despite the challenges, some still hold out hope that they will one day return to their studies.

Dreams on hold Mahsa, a young woman who had aspired to become a lawyer, now spends her days confined to her home. "The Taliban want us to marry, have children, cook, and sew," she said. "But they don't realize that women make up half of society. Our demand is simple: let us pursue our dreams and education." Her words reflect the frustration and despair of thousands of young women whose lives have been upended by the ban. Many say the restric-

tions have left them feeling isolated and hopeless, as the right to education remains out of reach.

Global condemnation and calls for action Heather Barr, deputy director of the Women's Rights Division at Human Rights Watch, has called the continued closure of educational institutions to women a severe violation of human rights. She urged the international community to take more concrete actions to hold the Taliban accountable. "It is time for the international community to treat this crisis with the seriousness it deserves," Barr told

Amu News. "Expressions of concern are not enough. We need to see Taliban leaders prosecuted in the International Criminal Court, and nations such as Australia, Canada, Germany, and the Netherlands must follow through on their promises to bring a case to the International Court of Justice for the Taliban's viola-

tions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women." Barr also emphasized the importance of including Afghan women in diplomatic discussions, such as the upcoming Doha talks, and pressing for gen-

der apartheid to be recognized as a crime under international law.

The emotional toll For many young women, the ban has taken a significant psychological toll. Students like Savita, who once attended university with hopes of contributing to society, now find their dreams shattered. "With so much hope, we went to study, aiming to become productive members of society," Savita said. "But with the closure of universities, all of our goals and aspirations have been destroyed. The government has turned our lives into rubble." The ban has also left

many women battling depression and other mental health challenges, compounding the already dire situation for Afghan women under Taliban rule.

The Taliban's decision to bar women from universities has deprived thousands of young women of the chance to build better futures for themselves and their communities. Many students warn that if the situation persists, they may have no choice but to leave the country, a sentiment echoed by activists who continue to call on the international community to act decisively.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman of Shura Council of KSA, Dr Abdullah bin Mohammad bin Ibrahim Al-Sheikh called on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Restoration of powers and funds KP Local Council Association announces protest

E.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Local Council Association has announced a protest and sit-in outside the provincial assembly on Thursday, December 26, 2024. The sit-in and protest aim to restore local government powers and ensure the allocation of funds through concrete measures.

Addressing a press conference at the Peshawar Press Club, the President of the Local Council Association and Mayor of Mardan, Himayatullah Mayar, stated that local government elections were conducted under the Local Government Act 2019, which was later amended. "We demand that the Act be restored to its original form and that rules of business be framed under Section 112 of the Act in accordance with its true spirit," he emphasized.

He further stressed that funds allocated under the Provincial Finance Commission (PFC) Awards for the fiscal years 2021-22, 2022-23, 2023-24, and 2024-25 must be released without delay.

Mayar also emphasized the need to provide offices, funds, powers, and other essential resources to the representatives and councils of the merged districts. He called for an increase in allowances for members elected on reserved seats, along with the alloca-

tion of separate funds. He proposed raising the local governments' share in the PFC Award from 20% to 30%.

Highlighting the setbacks faced by local governments, Mayar stated that three out of their four-year tenure have been wasted. He urged the government to extend the tenure by three years through immediate legislation.

Himayatullah Mayar added that the first phase of local government elections in 17 districts was held on December 19, 2021, exactly three years ago, while the second phase in 18 districts took place on March 31, 2022. Representatives assumed office in 2022 and began fulfilling their responsibilities. However, on April 12, 2022, the government led by then-Chief Minister Mehmood Khan amended the Local Government Act 2019, significantly curtailing the political, administrative, and financial powers of local governments. These powers were handed over to the provincial government and bureaucracy.

Section 30(2)(b) of the Act, which allowed funds to be received from the provincial government or other authorities in Pakistan, were also removed. As a result, local governments have not received any funds from the PFC Award or other sources over the past three years.

Consequently, councils have been unable to prepare budgets, pass legislation, or address political, administrative, and financial matters. This has deprived local governments of their constitutional and legal mandate, undermining good governance, social and municipal services, local development, and public participation at the grassroots level. Which is the violation of Pakistan's Constitution and the Local Government Act.

He further added that the Local Council Association has pursued all possible ways since 2022, including negotiations, peaceful protests, and legal actions, but to no avail. Despite successful discussions and declarations with various chief ministers and ministers, no concrete steps have been taken to address their concerns.

The President of the Local Council Association announced that the association had already begun its protests with demonstrations in Adiala Jail, Rawalpindi, and in front of Parliament House on December 17, 2024. The next phase of their campaign will take place on December 26, 2024, in Peshawar. The protests will continue until the restoration of local government powers and funds is achieved through practical measures.

4 Palestinians killed in Israeli strike on West Bank

RAMALLAH (AFP): The Palestinian health ministry said Thursday that an Israeli air strike on a car killed four Palestinians and wounded three near the occupied West Bank city of Tulkarem. The ministry announced that the Palestinians were killed "as a result of the (Israeli) bombing of a vehicle in Tulkarem camp," which the Israeli army did not immediately confirm to AFP.

Meanwhile, Palestinian militant group Hamas said Thursday that Israel's strikes in Yemen after the Houthi rebels fired a missile at the country were a "dangerous development."

"We regard this escalation as a dangerous development and an extension of the aggression against our Palestinian people, Syria and the Arab region," Hamas said in a statement as Israel struck ports and energy infrastructure in Yemen after intercepting a missile attack by the Houthis.

Meanwhile, Nahida al-Sabbagh has endured the battles in Jenin refugee camp, where she lives, since Saturday. The fighting between local Palestinian armed fighters from the Jenin Brigades and security forces continues near her home around the clock. But it is the identity of the security forces clashing with those fighters that is most shocking to Nahida. They're not Israeli. In fact, they're Palestinian, and represent the Palestinian Authority (PA).

Israel hits ports, energy sites in Yemen

CAIRO/JERUSALEM (Reuters): Israel launched strikes against ports and energy infrastructure in Houthi-held parts of Yemen on Thursday and threatened more attacks against the Iran-aligned militant group, which has launched hundreds of missiles at Israel over the past year.

As Israeli jets were in the air, the Israeli military said it intercepted a missile headed toward central Israel which destroyed a school building in Ramat Efal in the western part of Tel Aviv with what a military spokesperson described as falling shrapnel. The Houthis — who have launched attacks on international shipping near Yemen since November 2023, in solidarity with Palestinians in Israel's war with Hamas — said they had attacked Tel Aviv overnight, launching two ballistic missiles and hitting "precise military targets."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said: "After Hamas, Hezbollah and the Assad regime in Syria, the Houthis are nearly the last remaining arm of Iran's axis of evil. They are learning and they will learn the hard way, that whoever harms Israel — pays a very heavy price for it." Hamas and the Lebanese Hezbollah are also allies of Iran.

The Israeli attack, involving 14 fighter jets and other aircraft, came in two waves, with a first series of strikes on the ports of Salif and Ras Issa and a second series hitting the capital Sanaa, military spokesperson Lt. Col. Nadav Shoshani told reporters. "We made extensive preparations for these operations with efforts to refine our intelligence and to optimize the strikes," he said.

Al Masirah TV, the main television news outlet run by the Houthis, said the airstrikes killed nine people, seven in Salif and two in the Ras Issa oil facility, both in the western province of Hodeidah.

Two sources at the port of Hodeidah told Reuters that an Israeli strike destroyed a tugboat, but the port has several others capable of towing ships to the dock.

In Sanaa, the strikes also targeted two central power stations south and north of the capital, Sanaa, which Al Masirah said had cut electricity to thousands of families. An official from the Electricity Department in Sanaa told Reuters that airstrikes hit fuel depots at two power stations — one in Dhahban, north of the capital, and the other in Haiz, south of Sanaa. He said fires had been contained and electricity was expected to be restored within hours.

President calls for greater cooperation with Saudi Arabia

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has emphasized the need for enhancing parliamentary cooperation and high-level exchanges with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) to deepen the fraternal relationship between Pakistan and KSA. He reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to further strengthening economic, political, and cultural ties with KSA for the mutual benefit of both nations.

The President expressed these views while talking to the Chairman of the Shura Council of KSA, Dr Abdullah bin Mohammad bin Ibrahim Al-Sheikh, who along with members of the Shura Council called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, today. Speaker National Assembly, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, Deputy Speaker National Assembly Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah,

Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan, Nawaf Bin Said Al-Malki, members of Parliament and senior government officials also attended the meeting.

Welcoming the delegation, the President said that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia enjoyed historic and brotherly ties, rooted in shared faith, history, and culture. He highlighted the immense potential for expanding economic and investment cooperation and called for making efforts to fully realize this potential.

The President expressed concern over the grave situation in the Middle East, arising out of the Israeli aggression targeting innocent civilians in Palestine, Lebanon and Syria. He said that Pakistan stood in complete solidarity with their brothers and sisters from Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria. The President conveyed his greetings and good wishes to the

Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, His Majesty King Salman bin Abdulaziz, and His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman. He said that the people of Pakistan prayed for the good health, well-being and long life of His Majesty King Salman bin Abdulaziz.

During the meeting, both sides emphasized the need to transform the longstanding bilateral relationship into a more robust and strategic partnership. Dr Al-Sheikh described his visit to Pakistan as highly productive, noting that he had fruitful discussions with Pakistan's leadership and parliamentarians. Chairman of the Shura Council of KSA conveyed the greetings and good wishes of His Majesty King Salman bin Abdulaziz and His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman for the President's health.

ICC accepts PCB's model on Champions Trophy

E.P. Report

LAHORE: The International Cricket Council (ICC) announced on Thursday that the Champions Trophy 2025 will be played on a hybrid model with matches to be played in the host country Pakistan and a neutral venue.

"India and Pakistan matches hosted by either country at ICC events during the 2024-2027 rights cycle will be played at a neutral venue," the ICC Board confirmed. Pakistan was to host the eight-team ICC Champions Trophy in February-March 2025, but the impasse aroused when the Board of Control for Cricket in India refused to send its team to Pakistan for the ICC event citing security and political reasons. The Indian team demanded their matches to be shifted to a neutral venue in the UAE while Pakistan refused to do so.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) maintained that Pakistan cricket team had always participated in the ICC events in India despite similar security concerns and the Indian cricket team should reciprocate the goodwill gestures by the PCB. The BCCI refused to budge and, as a result, the PCB took a stern stance and refused to send its teams to India for the future ICC events as well. The PCB demanded the ICC maintain parity and allow a similar arrangement to Pakistan cricket in the ICC events to be hosted by India.

The PCB floated a 'fusion model' and demanded that the Pakistan cricket team should also be shifted to some neutral venue during the ICC events, hosted by India. Pakistan's stance won and the impasse was only broken after the ICC Board agreed to a similar arrangement for the ICC

2024-2027 rights cycle.

The ICC said, "This will apply to the upcoming ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025 (hosted by Pakistan), set to be played in February and March 2025, as well as the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2025 (hosted by India) and the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 (hosted by India and Sri Lanka)." The ICC further announced that the PCB has been awarded hosting rights of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup in 2028, where neutral venue arrangements will also apply.

The schedule for the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 is set to be confirmed soon, with Pakistan aiming to defend the title they won in 2017. The eight-team event will feature Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, England, India, New Zealand, and South Africa, alongside hosts Pakistan.

Omar Ayub accuses govt of avoiding negotiations

E.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Opposition Leader in the National Assembly, Omar Ayub, has accused the government of showing a lack of interest in negotiations with the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party.

Speaking to the media outside the Peshawar High Court, Ayub stated that if the government is willing to negotiate, it should do so, but if not, the PTI will not be intimidated.

He emphasized that the negotiation committee, led by PTI founder Imran Khan, is in place, and it is now up to the government to decide whether or not to engage in talks. Ayub also expressed frustration with the prolonged hearing of the Al-Qadir Trust case involving Imran Khan, which continued late into the night despite the court's usual working hours ending by 3 or 4 pm. He questioned the necessity of such extended proceedings, reaffirming that PTI's struggle for constitutional rights will persist, regardless of challenges.

Indian Hindu pilgrims team arrives

E.P. Report

LAHORE: A 71-member delegation of Indian Hindu pilgrims, led by Vijay Kumar Sharma, arrived in Pakistan through the Wagah border crossing on Thursday to perform their religious rituals at Shri Katas Raj Temple in Chakwal.

The delegation was warmly received by the Additional Secretary (Shrines) of the Evacuee Trust Property board (ETPB), Saifullah Khokhar, and the President of the Pakistan Hindu Mandir Management Committee, Krishan Sharma. Bouquets were presented to the pilgrims on behalf of Federal Minister Chaudhry Salik Hussain and ETPB Chairman Syed Ata-ur-Rehman.

Speaking to the media at border crossing, Vijay Kumar Sharma expressed his gratitude for the warm reception, stating, "Our visit to Pakistan conveys a message of peace and love."

Kurram issue: Notices issued to federal, KP govts

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising Justice Sahibzada Asadullah and Justice Waqar Ahmad heard the petition filed by Hamayatullah Mayar and Safiullah. The counsel Babar Khan Yousafzai advocate argued that the provincial government had transferred the funds of the tehsil councils to the district administration, instead of releasing them at the tehsil level, as required by law.

He stated that the local government elections were held in two phases, and in the first phase, candidates opposing the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party were successful. Subsequently, the provincial government amended the Local Government Act and transferred the funds to the district administration.

However, after the second phase of the local government elections, in which PTI-backed candidates were successful, the government again amended the Local Government Act and ordered the release of funds to the tehsil councils. The counsel argued that the government released funds only to 56 tehsil nazims affiliated with the PTI party, while ignoring the remaining 75 tehsil councils. The petitioners' counsel contended that the government's action was discriminatory and unconstitutional, as it favored only those tehsil nazims who were affiliated with the PTI. He requested the court to direct the government to release the development funds to all tehsil councils, without discrimination, and to ensure that the funds are utilized for the welfare of the people. PHC issued notices to the provincial government and the Local Government Department, seeking their response to the petition after hearing of arguments.

The petitioner requested the court to direct the government to take immediate measures to restore peace and order in the district, reopen educational institutions and provide basic facilities including healthcare to the residents.

The lawyer also requested the court to direct the government to make arrangement for the treatment of patients and to provide facilities for the transportation of patients to Peshawar and other hospitals by opening Parachinar Airport.

PHC issued notices to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and federal governments seeking their response and adjourned further hearing on the writ petition.

PHC seeks KP's govt response against discrimination in LG funds: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has issued notices to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government and the Local Government Department, seeking their response to a petition regarding the non-release of

development funds to over 75 tehsil councils in the province, on Thursday.

A two-member bench of PHC comprising Justice Sahibzada Asadullah and Justice Waqar Ahmad heard the petition filed by Hamayatullah Mayar and Safiullah. The counsel Babar Khan Yousafzai advocate argued that the provincial government had transferred the funds of the tehsil councils to the district administration, instead of releasing them at the tehsil level, as required by law.

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Russia ready to compromise with Trump on Ukraine war

MOSCOW (Reuters):

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Thursday that he was ready to compromise over Ukraine in possible talks with US President-elect Donald Trump on ending the war and had no conditions for starting talks with the Ukrainian authorities. Putin, fielding questions on state TV during his annual question and answer session with Russians, told a reporter of a US news channel that he was ready to meet Trump, whom he said he had not spoken to for years.

Asked what he might be able to offer Trump, Putin dismissed an assertion that Russia was in a weak position, saying that Moscow had gotten much stronger since he ordered troops into Ukraine in 2022. "We have always said that we are ready for negotiations and compromises," Putin said, after saying that Russian forces, advancing across the

entire front, were moving towards achieving their primary goals in Ukraine.

Putin dismissed the idea of agreeing a temporary truce with Kyiv, saying only a long-lasting peace deal with Ukraine would suffice. Any talks should take as their starting point a preliminary agreement reached between Russian and Ukrainian negotiators in the early weeks of the war at talks in Istanbul, which was never implemented, he added.

"Soon, those Ukrainians who want to fight will run out, in my opinion, soon there will be no one left who wants to fight. We are ready, but the other side needs to be ready for both negotiations and compromises," he said. Trump, a self-styled master of brokering agreements and author of the 1987 book "Trump: The Art of the Deal", has vowed to swiftly end the conflict, but has not yet given any details

on how he might achieve that.

Reuters reported last month that Putin was open to discussing a Ukraine ceasefire deal with Trump, but ruled out making any major territorial concessions and insisted Kyiv abandon its ambitions to join NATO. Putin said on Thursday that Russia had no conditions to start talks with Ukraine and was ready to negotiate with anyone, including President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

But he said any deal could only be signed with Ukraine's legitimate authorities, which for now the Kremlin considered to be only the Ukrainian parliament. Zelenskyy, whose term has technically expired but who has delayed an election because of the war, would need to be re-elected for Moscow to consider him a legitimate signatory to any deal to ensure it was legally watertight, said Putin.



OMAN: Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed called on Minister of Royal Office, General Sultan Mohammad Al Nu'amani.

Naval Chief visits Oman, meets military leadership

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf, called on the top military and naval leadership of Oman during an official visit. He held separate meetings with the Minister of Royal Office, General Sultan Mohammad Al Nu'amani, the Commander of Royal Navy of Oman, Rear Admiral Saif Nasser Al Rahbi, and the Commander of National Defence College, Rear Admiral Ali Abdullah Al Shidi.

During the meetings,

discussions centered on strengthening defence cooperation and reinforcing the historic ties between Oman and Pakistan.

The Naval Chief emphasized that Pakistan Navy is a strong proponent of collaborative maritime security in coordination with regional countries and has always been at the forefront of such initiatives. Oman's civil and military leadership appreciated Pakistan Navy's efforts in promoting collaborative maritime security in the region and acknowledged the importance of strong bilateral

naval cooperation.

The Naval Chief also visited key facilities, including the RNO Said bin Sultan Naval Base, Oman Naval Ship, Maritime Security Centre, National Defence College, Military Technical College, and Sultan Qaboos Naval Academy, where he received detailed briefings.

Pakistan and Oman share a historically close relationship, and the visit of Naval Chief is expected to further enhance and broaden defence ties between the two countries, particularly in naval cooperation.

LHC annuls Imran's video link appearance orders

E.P. Report

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) declared a notification, enabling the police to present Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan via video link for physical remand, as unlawful.

The LHC bench, headed by Justice Tariq Saleem, announced its verdict on a plea filed by Imran Khan, challenging the notification for video link appearance for physical remand in May 9 cases. In its order, the LHC ruled that presenting accused persons via video link for physical remand

cases may affect their fundamental rights.

"The Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) do not allow issuance of notification for any individual. The home department had issued a notification for video link attendance of Imran Khan without cabinet approval, which the court declared illegal. The LHC ruled that the ATA laws have undergone several amendments, but Section 21-A regarding physical remand remains unchanged.

The court has issued a detailed written verdict, declaring the notification for video link attendance

illegal. The LHC, however, ruled that the accused can be presented via video link during the trial. The court accepted the PTI founder's plea, who had challenged the notification for video link attendance in 12 cases related to May 9 violence.

Earlier, the Punjab government provided the high court with information regarding the FIRs registered against Imran Khan in different districts of province. Farrukh Lodhi, a lawyer for the Punjab government, presented the report in the Lahore high court.