

ISLAMABAD (INP): The government of Pakistan has decided to release more than 50 billion rupees (Rs) in subsidies for the power sector. According to reports, Rs159 billion has already been released to the power sector in the current financial year, but now more than Rs50 billion in subsidies are in the pipeline. Govt sources say that in the first quarter, Rs128 billion were released for power sector subsidies.



@thefrontierpost

First national English daily published from Peshawar, Islamabad, Lahore, Quetta, Karachi and Washington D.C

www.thefrontierpost.com

Vol. XXXIXI

No. 330

Regd. No. 241

JAMADI US SANNI 20 1446 -- MONDAY, DECEMBER 23 2024

PESHAWAR EDITION

12 PAGES

PRICE. 30

# Martyrs' sacrifices to never be forgotten: COAS

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Terming martyrs (Shuhada) are the pride of Pakistan Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir, NI(M) said that the sacrifices of martyrs will never be forgotten.

Interacting with officers and troops during his visit to Wana (South Waziristan) here Sunday, the COAS said that with the resolute support of the nation, the Pakistan Army, in collaboration with law

enforcement agencies (LEAs), remains steadfast in its determination to eliminate terrorism and extremism in all its forms besides ensuring the restoration of lasting peace and stability across the country, Insha'Allah, said an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release.

The COAS commended the officers and troops unwavering resilience and steadfastness in the face of terrorism, reaffirming the nation's pride in their sac-

rifices, it further said.

The Army Chief highlighted that the courage, resilience, and unyielding determination of Pakistan's armed forces are the cornerstone of the nation's sovereignty.

He described the soldiers of the Armed Forces and LEAs as the true heroes of the nation, whose bravery and selfless dedication inspire the entire country.

The COAS reaffirmed Pakistan Army's commitment to pursuing Fitna Al

Khwarij which shall continue to be hunted down till its elimination along with the facilitator, abettors and financier who will be made to pay the price for their nefarious activities against the state.

During the visit, the COAS received a comprehensive briefing on the prevailing security landscape and ongoing counter-terrorism operations.

Upon his arrival in Wana, the COAS was received by the Corps Commander Peshawar.



WANA: Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir addressing the troops during his visit to South Waziristan.

## Funeral prayers for 16 martyred personnel offered

RAWALPINDI (INP): Funeral prayers for 16 personnel of armed forces who embraced martyrdom in exchange of firing against Khwarij terrorists at Makin (South Waziristan) was offered on Sunday at Bannu Garrison.

The funeral prayer for a civil camera technician Waqas Ahmed R/O Jamurd who also included in the martyrs was also offered.

Corps commander Peshawar, senior serving military, civil Officials and large number of people from the area attended the funeral, said an Inter-Services

Public Relations (ISPR) news release.

The martyred soldiers include Lance Naik Liaquat Ali Shaheed, 30, resident of Kurram; Lance Naik Muhammad Ishaq Shaheed, 31, resident of Karak; Havildar Ayub

Khan Shaheed, 38, resident of Attock; Havildar Umar Hayat Shaheed, resident of Kohat; Sepoy Mahbood Rehman Shaheed, 26, resident of Tank district; Havildar

Muhammad Hayat Shaheed, 37, resident of Bannu; Lance Naik Sher Muhammad Shaheed, 26, resident of Malakand; Sepoy Ehsanul Haque Shaheed, 22, resident of Lower Dir; Sepoy Junaid Shaheed, 25, resident of Khyber district; Lance Naik Hamid Ali Shaheed, 29, resident of Swabi; Sepoy Kaleemullah Shaheed, 26, resident of Lakki Marwat; Havildar Tahir Mahmood Shaheed, 41, resident of Kohat; Lance Naik Musawwar Shaheen Shaheed, 29, resident of Kohat; Sepoy Faiz Muhammad, 22, resident of Mansehra; Sepoy Tayyab Ali Shaheed, 23, resident of Haripur district and Sepoy Junaid Shaheed, 26, resident of Shangla district.

The supreme sacrifices of the martyrs for the defence of motherland will not go in vain.

## Pickup truck driver killed by police

KILLEEN, Texas (AP): A pickup truck driver fleeing police careened through the doors of a JCPenney store in Texas and continued through a busy mall, injuring five people before he was fatally shot by officers, authorities said.

The truck crashed into the department store in Killeen, about 68 miles (109 kilometers) north of the state capital Austin, around 5:30 p.m. Saturday and continued into the building, striking people as it went, Sgt. Bryan Washko of the Texas Department of Public Safety said in an evening news briefing.

Emergency medical services transported four victims from the mall to area hospitals and another traveled to a hospital separately. They ranged in age from 6 to 75 years old and their conditions were not immediately known, he said.

## PM pays tributes to working women

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday lauded the invaluable contributions of working women in Pakistan, acknowledging their essential role in building society and driving the nation's economic progress.

In his message on the occasion of National Working Women's Day, the prime minister emphasized that women constitute more than half of Pakistan's population and are pivotal in shaping the country's future.

Quoting the founder of the nation, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah (RA), he said, "No nation can rise to the height of glory unless your women are side by side with

you."

He reiterated his government's commitment to ensuring equal opportunities for women, enabling them to excel and contribute to national advancement.

Highlighting the achievements of women in leadership roles across various fields, including education, healthcare, business, and public service, the prime minister acknowledged their indispensable contributions not only in professional spheres but also in nurturing families and raising future generations.

Recognizing the unique challenges faced by working women, the prime minister outlined several government initiatives aimed at supporting and empowering them including the provision of

youth interest-free loans to encourage entrepreneurship among women, establishment of an endowment fund for women's education and sports development, creation of daycare centers to help women balance work and family responsibilities and specialized training programs to enhance women's skills and leadership potential.

"My government envisions a future where women in leadership are the norm, not the exception," the prime minister stated. He also stressed the importance of creating women-friendly work environments that allow them to thrive, emphasizing that fostering their talents is key to ensuring their continued role in shaping Pakistan's progress and prosperity.

## CM KP orders helicopter service for stranded Kurram residents

PESHAWAR:In a bit to mitigate the sufferings of the people of district Kurram with regard to transportation due closure of land, the provincial government, kn the special directives of Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur, has launched of a helicopter service to the district.

According to details, on Sunday, the government-operated helicopter provided air transport to a total of 147 individuals, including tribal elders, patients, students, government staff, and other civilians. In its first flight, on Sunday, the helicopter transported 15 individuals from

Peshawar to Parachinar, including jirga members and government officials. The helicopter made three additional trips between Parachinar and Thall, transporting 87 people from Parachinar to Thall and 15 individuals back to Parachinar. In its final flight on Sunday, 30 individuals were airlifted from Parachinar to Peshawar. On Saturday, 53 individuals were transported from Parachinar to Peshawar. Over the past two days, a total of 200 people have been airlifted by the provincial government's helicopter service. Moreover, to address the shortage of medicines in

the area, since 4th December, the helicopter has completed seven flights, delivering medical supplies worth over Rs. 60 million to Kurram. In a statement, Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur said that the provincial government was fully aware of the difficulties faced by Kurram's residents due to road closures adding that the provincial government was utilizing all the available resources to mitigate the sufferings of common man there. He further stated that the provincial government was making all out efforts to finding a sustainable solution to the issue of Kurram on permanent basis.

## Turkiye's top diplomat meets Syria's new leader in Damascus

ANKARA (AFP): Turkiye's foreign minister Hakan Fidan met with Syria's new leader Ahmed Al-Sharaa in Damascus on Sunday, Ankara's foreign ministry said.

A video released by the Anadolu state news agency showed the two men greeting each other.

No details of where the meeting took place in the Syrian capital were released by the ministry.

Fidan had announced on

Friday that he planned to travel to Damascus to meet Syria's new leaders, who ousted Syria's strongman Bashar Assad after a lightning offensive.

Turkiye's spy chief Ibrahim Kalin had earlier visited the city on December 12, just a few days after Assad's fall.

Kalin was filmed leaving the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, surrounded by bodyguards, as broadcast by the private Turkish chan-

nel NTV. Turkiye has been a key backer of the opposition to Assad since the uprising against his rule began in 2011. Besides supporting various militant groups, it has welcomed Syrian dissenters and millions of refugees.

However, Fidan has rejected claims by US president-elect Donald Trump that the militants' victory in Syria constituted an "unfriendly takeover" of the country by Turkiye.

## Gaza rescuers say Israeli strikes kill 28

GAZA (AFP): Gaza's civil defence agency said Israeli strikes overnight and early Sunday killed at least 28 Palestinians, including at one family's home and at a school building the military said was used by Hamas.

More than 14 months into the Israel-Hamas war, there was no let-up in the violence in the Gaza Strip even as Palestinian groups involved in the fighting said a ceasefire deal was "closer than ever".

Israel has faced growing criticism of its actions during the war, triggered by Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack, including from rights groups accusing it of "acts of genocide" which the Israeli government strongly denies.

Pope Francis on Saturday condemned deadly bombardment a day earlier that killed several children as "cruelty", prompting a sharp response from Israel which accused the pontiff of double stan-

dards. On the ground in Gaza, civil agency spokesman Mahmud Bassal said that at least 13 people were killed in an air strike on a house in central Gaza's Deir el-Balah belonging to the Abu Samra family.

Hours after the strike, an AFP photographer saw residents searching through the debris for survivors, while others looked for belongings they could salvage.

Continued on Back Page

## Mastermind of May-9 incident to be held accountable: Atta Tarar

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar Sunday declared the May-9 incident an unforgivable crime and vowed that its mastermind would be held accountable.

Speaking at a public gathering here, he said that terrorism and dialogue could not go hand in hand, stressing that attacks on the nation under the guise of politics were unacceptable.

Terming May-9 one of the darkest days in Pakistan's history, the minister criticised the PTI for allegedly damaging the country's defence and integrity. He accused the party of attacking the nation under the guise of politics and writing to international organisations to hinder Pakistan's progress. He stressed that such acts of political terrorism and attacks on national monuments and martyrs' memorials were unacceptable.

"Those who sacrificed

their lives for the country deserve respect. The attacks on martyrs' memorials prove the enemy-like behaviour of some elements," he said, adding, "This cannot be forgiven. The mastermind behind this incident will face justice."

He urged political opponents to focus their differences on politicians rather than targeting martyrs, adding that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf attempted to harm the country's defence and integrity. Highlighting Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) record, he stated that during its tenure, the country witnessed progress, with initiatives such as a subsidy of Rs. 95 billion on electricity bills and the commencement of new development projects in his constituency.

Attaullah Tarar stated that the government believed in dialogue but would not tolerate any form of political terrorism. "We are political people, and we value dialogue. But when politics is used

as a cover for attacks on the nation, it becomes intolerable," he asserted.

He also accused the PTI of hiring foreign lobbying groups to run campaigns against Pakistan, causing damage to the country's reputation and interests.

The minister highlighted the achievements of the PML-N government, mentioning how Pakistan always progressed under its leadership. He shared that inflation was reduced, the economy strengthened, and Pakistan's global standing improved during their tenure.

He announced that foreign investors were now bringing billions of dollars into Pakistan due to their confidence in the country's leadership. "The stock exchange is at a historic high, and developmental projects are being launched across the country," he added.

He assured his constituents in NA-127 and PP-163 that all promises made to them were being fulfilled, with ongoing

development initiatives aimed at improving the region's infrastructure and resolving public issues.

Attaullah Tarar reiterated the government commitment to easing the burden on the public, revealing that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif allocated Rs 50 billion subsidy on electricity bills, while Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz added Rs. 40 billion subsidy. With the introduction of the winter package, electricity bills would further decrease. "We have vowed to make this country an economic power, and with sincerity and determination, this dream will soon become a reality," he added.

The gathering ended with the minister quoting a motivational verse: "Rise and gird yourself; see what wonders God does next."

The gathering was attended by a large number of citizens, including PML-N leaders Mian Imran Javed and Rana Safdar.



LAHORE: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in Lahore.

## PM forms committee for negotiations with PTI

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has established a negotiation committee composed of members from the government coalition to engage in talks with Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

The committee includes prominent figures such as Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, Advisor to the Prime Minister Rana Sanaullah Khan, Senator Irfan Siddiqui, Raja Pervez Ashraf, Syed Naveed Qamar, Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, Aleem Khan, and Chaudhry Salik Hussain.

The formation of the

committee follows a recommendation made by National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, who had interacted with PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar the previous evening. During their discussion, Barrister Gohar emphasized the importance of dialogue and requested the Speaker's facilitation in initiating talks.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif appreciated the Speaker's efforts and expressed optimism that the dialogue process would prioritize national security and the broader interests of the country.

Barrister Gohar welcomes govt's committee

to hold dialogue

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has welcomed the formation of negotiating committee by the prime minister to end the political deadlock in the country.

PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar hoped that the negotiations between the government and opposition would be fruitful.

"Both the committees have seasoned politicians. We hope that the negotiations are all set to start soon to end the deadlock," said Barrister Gohar.

It merits mention here that Prime Minister constituted a committee to hold dialogue with PTI on the suggestion of National

Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq.

The committee comprised Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, Rana Sanaullah, Senator Irfan Siddiqui, Raja Pervez Ashraf, Syed Naveed Qamar, Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, Abdul Aleem Khan, and Chaudhry Salik Hussain.

The speaker's efforts were also acknowledged by the PM, who emphasised prioritising national security and public interest.

Earlier, PTI chairman had requested the NA speaker to play his role in the dialogue between the government and opposition.





# Sindh CM for swift completion of Malir Expressway Project, crackdown

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, without protocol, conducted a surprise morning inspection of the Malir Expressway's 9-km stretch between the Jam Sadiq Bridge and the Shah Faisal Interchange, ordering completion by the end of December so that it could be open for traffic.

Addressing the Karachi Commissioner, DIG Police and DMC representatives, he sternly warned regarding encroachments. "The project must be finished by December 30," Mr Shah said, directing Engineer Khalid Mansoor to expedite construction. He emphasised the importance of removing all illegal structures and parking along the express-

way, from the Shah Faisal Interchange to the airport, to ensure smooth traffic flow.

The Malir Expressway, according to Shah, will reduce travel time between the Jam Sadiq Bridge and Jinnah Terminal via the Shah Faisal Interchange to just 15 minutes. He reiterated his commitment to clearing encroachments from Shah Faisal Interchange all the way to Karachi Airport.

This high-speed expressway will be restricted to vehicles only; motorcycles and rickshaws will be prohibited. Security checkpoints will be established to manage heavy traffic and maintain safety, the CM announced.

Highlighting the expressway's importance as

a vital corridor for commuters and cargo transport, linking Shah Faisal, the airport, Shahr-e-Faisal, and the National Highway [towards Link Road and Thatta], Shah pledged to accelerate work on the remaining section extending from Shah Faisal to Kathore following the inauguration of this first phase.

The Chief Minister concluded by announcing a follow-up night inspection, instructing officials to install and activate road lighting along the entire expressway before his return. The project is envisioned as a transformative initiative to alleviate Karachi's chronic traffic congestion and improve city-wide connectivity.

## Minister, US envoy attend Christmas celebrations

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Minister for Minority Affairs Ramesh Singh Arora attended the annual Christmas celebration organized by the Ibadat Trust at ST Thomas Center, Raiwind, here on Sunday.

During the event, Moderator/President of the Church of Pakistan and Bishop of Raiwind, Dr. Azad Marshal, led a special prayer for the development and prosperity of Pakistan. The event was also attended by Kristin Hawkins from the US Consulate, Parliamentary Secretary for Human Rights and Minority Affairs Sonia Ashar, Colonel McDonald from the Salvation Army Church, Reverend Nolakha from the Presbyterian Church, Dr. Majid Abel, and various other prominent figures from the Christian community.

In his address,

Provincial Minister Ramesh Singh Arora said, "Christmas is a celebration of love, peace, and brotherhood, highlighting the importance of social harmony and the role of minority communities. Pakistan is a religiously diverse country, where every community has the right to live according to its own faith and traditions. I assure you that the Punjab government will remain actively engaged in protecting the rights and welfare of minority communities."

Parliamentary Secretary Sonia Ashar, in her speech, emphasized, "We must respect each other's religious beliefs and traditions to build a society based on love, peace, and equality. The Punjab government is constantly working to protect minority rights, and we firmly believe that every citizen should have equal

rights."

Dr. Azad Marshal, in his address, said Christmas teaches us the importance of love and charity towards one another. It is our collective responsibility to contribute to the development of our country and work towards building a strong and peaceful Pakistan, free from sectarianism.

Colonel McDonald of the Salvation Army Church, Reverend Nolakha from the Presbyterian Church, Dr. Majid Abel, and several other Christian leaders expressed their thoughts and extended a message of religious harmony and solidarity with the Christian community.

At the conclusion of the event, the provincial Minister, along with US Consul General Kristin Hawkins and others cut a Christmas cake to celebrate the occasion.

## PML-F leader seeks rightful share

KARACHI (PPI): The central vice president of Pakistan Muslim League-Functional, Pir Yasir Sain, on Sunday urged the government to immediately cancel the plan to construct six more canals on the Indus River in Punjab and provide the people of Sindh with their rightful share of water to alleviate the growing unrest.

This he said in a meeting with Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) leader Shah Nawaz Brohi in Karachi. Pir opposed the construction of more canals on Indus River and said that if new canals were constructed from the Indus River, major cities in Sindh and Balochistan would face severe water shortages.

He further stated that the elders of the Sindh region had rendered significant sacrifices for the country, which could never be forgotten. He also emphasized that the country needed good politicians, not contractors. "At present, the middle class, peasants, landowners, and laborers are in great distress, which is solely due to the corrupt rulers' wrong policies," he said. Engineer Yunus Brohi, Faqeer Ameen, and Ali Khan were also present at the meeting.

## WCLA organizes guided tour of Sikh heritage sites

LAHORE (APP): The Walled City of Lahore Authority (WCLA) organized a guided tour of Sikh heritage sites in Old Lahore titled "Yatra" in which tourists visited historical monuments of Sikhism such as Janam Asthans and Samadhis.

The tourists gathered at Food Street, followed by visits at historical monuments including Janam Asthan Guru Ram Das, Samadhi Guru Arjun Dev, Samadhi Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Samadhi Kharak Singh and Samadhi Nau Nehal Singh. Refreshments were also arranged for the tourists. They expressed positive feedback regarding Yatra tour and praised the efforts of WCLA in preserving and promoting heritage of minorities of the country.

Asghar Hussain, Deputy Director Tourism, Walled City of Lahore Authority, said, "The cultural and historical heritage of any nation is not limited to religious boundaries; in fact, it aims to connect and unite people of different faiths. The Sikh heritage sites in Old Lahore are as important as other

monuments. Therefore, we have dedicated tremendous amount of energy and efforts to preserve these sites. Moreover, we are striving to bring the public attention to these sites so that people come to understand their historical significance.

This successful guided tour is a witnessing testimony of the objectives of the Walled City of Lahore Authority which aims to establish a peaceful and secure environment for the tourism at our heritage sites".

Kamran Lashari, Director General, Walled City of Lahore Authority, also expressed his opinion and said "Old Lahore is home to numerous monuments that embody rich historical and cultural significance, transcending religious boundaries.

These monuments are an essential part of our shared heritage, and it is important for the public to appreciate and engage with them. Recognizing this, the Walled City of Lahore Authority (WCLA) has taken significant steps to create opportunities for people to visit and explore these sites."

## 47 sub-inspectors promoted

LAHORE (APP): As per the instructions of Inspector General of Police Punjab, Dr. Usman Anwar, a ceremony was held at the Central Police Office Lahore to promote 47 officers from the rank of Sub-Inspector to Inspector.

The IG Punjab, along with other officers, pinned the new rank of Inspector to the promoted officers. The ceremony was attended by the parents, children, and families of the promoted inspectors.

The IG and other senior police officers congratulated the promoted inspectors and their families. The promoted inspectors from Lahore, Faisalabad, and Sheikhupura were awarded their new ranks at the event.

Speaking on the occasion, the IG said that a record 4 Promotion Boards had been conducted this year, promoting 383 Sub-Inspectors to the rank of Inspector. He further said that promotions would also be given in other units such as Organized Crime, Safe Cities, and Cyber Crime. He also mentioned that under the P-Cadet Scheme, 1010 ASIs and 438 Sub-Inspectors were being recruited.

The IG shared with the participants that through the Public Service Commission, 390 Inspectors (Legal) and 86 Inspectors under HPDS are also being recruited. He added that the advanced promotion schedule for the next year had been prepared for promotions from Sub-Inspector to Inspector and DSP ranks. Furthermore, he mentioned that over 26,000 departmental promotions had been granted in the past two years. He instructed the promoted officers to perform their duties more diligently and become a strong shield between terrorists, criminals, and innocent citizens.

The ceremony was also attended by Additional IG Punjab, Sultan Ahmad Chaudhry, DIG Establishment I, Suleman Sultan Rana, DIG Establishment II, Captain (Retd.) Liaquat Ali Malik, and other senior officers, who also awarded promotion ranks to the promoted officers.

## School admin authorised to utilise expenditures

LAHORE (APP): The School Management Council has been given the authority by the Punjab Government to spend from Rs.4 to 25 lakhs for schools' works.

Schools Department sources told APP that the school administration is no longer dependent on the C&W Department for general work expenditures. Sources said the C&W Department used to build two bathrooms for Rs11.5 million, while the School Department will build it for Rs4 lakhs. In this connection, the CEO Education of the Schools Department has been instructed to focus on the schools of 5 UCs of the district.

The initiative will also help bring back out-of-school children in the 5 union councils. The Secretary School Education, in a statement, said that if even 50 percent of the children return with the decision, it will be a considerable improvement.



LAHORE: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar addressing the ceremony after inaugurate development works at Green Town. —APP Photo

## Inflation rate at lowest level in six years: Bilal Kayani

LAHORE (APP): Convener Parliamentary Task Force SDGs Bilal Azhar Kayani has said the country is moving towards improvement at the economic front and the rate of inflation has come down to the lowest level in the last six years.

He said the PTI always unveiled the plaques only day, adding that Maryam Nawaz did outstanding work in the health sector. He said the government that continued from 2018

in the FBR and other measures were underway, and this journey of economic improvement of the country would continue. He said the federal government and the Punjab government were continuing their journey of public service.

He said that the Punjab chief minister was launching project every other day, adding that Maryam Nawaz did outstanding work in the health sector. He said the government that continued from 2018

to 2022 caused a lot of damage to the country. He said that on the economic front, the country was moving towards improvement, while the policy rate had been significantly reduced. He said the inflation rate had decreased to the lowest level in the last six years. The journey of economic improvement and the war against terrorism would be continued, he added.

Bilal Kayani said that Nawaz Sharif had started

motorway projects for development of the country, as infrastructure was the basis of the country's development. He said work had started on Jhelum Road; the project would be completed by 2025, while work would now could be seen on 128 kilometres of the road.

He condemned the terrorist incident in South Waziristan, saying that the government and the military leadership were determined to uproot terrorism.

## Officials Suspended for Neglecting Kurram Victims

Peshawar: RIO Kohat / Sajid Commissioner Kohat suspends 5 officers including AAC, Tehsildar and TOI Thall for negligence during his surprise visit to the camp of Kurram victims.

Commissioner Kohat Division, Syed Motasim Billah Shah has on the special directives of the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, made a detailed visit to Tehsil Thall of Hangu district, adjacent to Kurram district on Sunday, where he received the patients, including women and children, who were brought by Helicopter from Kurram District. After welcoming, they were dispatched to Peshawar under the police

security. Officers of the Thall Scouts were also present on this occasion.

Commissioner Kohat on the spot recommended the removal and suspension of 5 officers including Additional Assistant Commissioner Thall, Tehsildar and TOI of TMA for their absence and negligence and recommended strict disciplinary action against them. Similarly, during a surprise visit to the camp set up for the victims of Kurram district, 2 female teachers who were previously appointed for the education of the affected children were immediately suspended due to the complaint of parents and children and the use of foul language. Commissioner

Kohat also apprised himself of the problems of the victims and directed the authorities concerned to make further improvements in the arrangements. He further directed to provide warm clothes, sweaters and shoes to the affected children to protect them from severe cold, and arrange more medicines required for the victims within 24 hours.

Commissioner Kohat paid glowing tributes to the Deputy Commissioner Hangu, Officers of Thall Scouts and Police for the overall best arrangements made on the road and Helipad for the safety of the victims and thanked them.

## Lahore experiences hazy day

LAHORE (APP): The provincial capital experienced a hazy day on Sunday as the Air Quality Index (AQI) soared above 700, with the lowest recorded at 287, categorized as "very unhealthy."

According to data from IQAir, the PM2.5 concentration in the city was 42.4 times higher than the World Health Organization's annual PM2.5 guideline value.

The most polluted areas in the city included Polo Ground Cantt (738), Askari 10 (461), Hiking & Mountaineering Club GCU (457), Tufail Road near Rahat Bakery (414), Thokar (400), DHA Phase V (386), Chattha Park Shahdara (374), Mini Market Gulberg (356), Ghazi Road Interchange (356), and Pine Avenue (352).

## 5 dead, 1350 injured in 1275 RTCs in Punjab

LAHORE (APP): Five persons were killed and 1350 injured in 1275 Road Traffic Crashes (RTCs) in all 37 districts of Punjab during the last 24 hours. Out of these, 566 people with serious injuries were shifted to different hospitals, while 748 victims with minor injuries were treated at the incident site by Rescue Medical Teams thus reducing the burden of Hospitals.

Furthermore, the analysis showed those 747 drivers, 60 underage drivers, 141 pedestrians, and 467 passengers were among the victims of road traffic crashes. The statistics show that 238 RTCs were reported in Lahore which affected 251 persons placing the Provincial Capital at top of the list followed by Faisalabad 99 in with 109 victims and at third Multan with 77 RTCs and 88 victims.

According to the data 1165 motorbikes, 69 autorickshaws, 144 motorcars, 28 vans, 09 passenger buses, 23 truck and 112 other types of auto vehicles.

## Tessori welcomes American delegation

KARACHI (PPI): Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori has said that Pakistan lacks no talent as many renowned doctors in the United States are of Pakistani origin.

"Graduates from Dow University are making their mark globally," he said while speaking at a reception held in

honor of the Association of Physicians of Pakistani Descent of North America (APPNA) at the Governor House, according to a statement.

He welcomed the esteemed guests from the United States and praised the organizers for arranging this magnificent gala. Tessori

commended APPNA's welfare initiatives, emphasizing the necessity of utilizing the association's expertise.

The Sindh governor said that the doors of the Governor House were open 24/7 for the public and that advanced IT courses were being conducted at there to empower youth.

## Churches security on high alert

LAHORE (APP): The provincial capital was placed under high-security alert on Sunday to ensure the safety of churches ahead of Christmas.

Enhanced security arrangements included the deployment of additional police force and snipers at sensitive churches. Police teams carried out their duties with vigilance, providing comprehensive security for prayer services.

Search and sweep operations were conducted around

churches and in Christian neighborhoods to maintain a secure environment. Senior officers supervised security measures at churches and other important locations to ensure effectiveness.

Comprehensive checks on individuals and vehicles were enforced at the city's entry and exit points.

Meanwhile, the Dolphin Squad, PRU and Elite Force teams carried out their daily patrols around churches to ensure a strong presence.

In a statement, CCPO

Bilal Siddique Kamyana reaffirmed Lahore Police's dedication to safeguarding religious minorities. He emphasized that the Meesaq Centers were actively addressing the issues of Christian citizens on a priority basis.

Additionally, he highlighted that Lahore Police was committed to, not only protecting minorities' worship places, but also ensuring the provision of legal services to these communities.

## Over 2.5m benefited from Police Khidmat centers

LAHORE (APP): Under the supervision of Inspector General of Police Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar, Punjab Police Khidmat centers are actively engaged in delivering digital services to citizens. Each month, millions of citizens across the province, including Lahore, benefit from over a dozen police services at these centers.

The IG Punjab said that during the current year, more

than 2.5 million citizens have availed policing services from these centers. According to the details, more than 700,000 citizens obtained character certificates, more than 1100,000 underwent general police verification, 4413 had police verification for private employees, over 220,000 registered tenancy agreements, and more than 29,000 had vehicle verifications.

Additionally, 150,000 citizens received medical certificates, over 78,000 reported lost documents, and 5713 registered crime reports. Furthermore, over 114,000 citizens obtained copies of FIRs, and 238 women's violence reports were filed. In efforts to protect vulnerable groups of society, legal and social protection was provided to over 99,000 individuals,

while 3529 citizens completed employee registration (ROPE). The IG Punjab emphasized that the Police Khidmat Marakaz is a remarkable project for public service delivery with provision of 14 services to citizens. He instructed RPOs and DPOs to further enhance and streamline the delivery of services to citizens following the feedback received from citizens.



KARACHI: A view of rush at Bohri bazar ahead of upcoming Christmas celebrations. —INP Photo



# Delegation of Dir Welfare Organization meets Secy Energy & Electronics

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has initiated a comprehensive two-point program aimed at controlling electricity load-shedding and increasing the production of affordable energy in the province.

This ambitious initiative includes the establishment of hundreds of small and large hydropower plants and the promotion of solar energy. Additionally, the feasibility of creating a provincial electricity distribution organization is being seriously evaluated to foster competition between federal and provincial distribution companies.

These remarks were shared by Secretary Energy and Power Department,

Nisar Ahmed, during a meeting with an eight-member delegation of the Dir Welfare Organization at the Civil Secretariat, Peshawar.

The meeting was also attended by Member Provincial Assembly from Upper Dir, Malik Gul Ibrahim. The delegation was led by Haji Sultan Yusuf Lalaji, President of the Dir Welfare Organization, along with Senior Vice President Ghulam Hussain Ghazi and former caretaker provincial minister Malik Shafiullah Khan. Secretary Nisar Ahmed highlighted the provincial government's proactive approach, with the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa convening weekly meetings to expedite energy production

initiatives. He noted the successful completion of mini-hydropower projects in various areas of the province, including Swat, which are providing affordable electricity to local communities. These projects have not only supplied power to households but also paved the way for the establishment of small industrial settlements, ensuring a steady supply of electricity for business growth and employment generation at the village level.

The delegation emphasized the urgent need for improved electricity supply in remote areas of Upper Dir, including Dug Dara, Sheringal, and Brikot. They also requested the solarization of key religious centers, including the

Sahibabad Tablighi Center. The construction of small hydropower plants on natural springs and rivers, such as Sabro Khor in Brikot, was proposed as a sustainable solution to meet local energy demands and boost cottage industries.

Secretary Nisar Ahmed assured the delegation of the government's commitment to enhancing energy infrastructure in the region. He reaffirmed that PEDO has been tasked with clear and urgent targets to implement energy projects effectively.

The delegation appreciated the provincial government's emergency measures to address electricity challenges and assured their full cooperation in implementing the province's energy policy.



# Artificial intelligence as a harbinger of creativity

Momina Ayaz Khan

**THE onset of the Fourth Industrial Revolution raises significant concerns regarding the potential impacts of artificial intelligence (AI) on employment and human creativity. Many envision a future reminiscent of science fiction, where conflicts between humans and machines unfold. However, experts argue that the depictions found in media-such as those in Terminator, Firefly, Skynet, Black Mirror, Blade Runner, Westworld, and Star Trek-do not accurately reflect reality. While machine learning and AI possess the capacity for imitation, they lack the imaginative qualities that characterize human thought.**

Consider the following quote: "Teaching a child how to confuse a comedian is just as psychologically damaging for the comedian as it is for the child." Many readers find discom-

fort in this statement, perhaps because its meaning is elusive. In reality, it is a nonsensical statement generated by AI trained on authentic quotes, highlighting the considerable journey AI must undertake before reaching a comparable level of human creativity. The relationship between human inventiveness and AI is multifaceted; while AI holds significant potential, equating it to human capabilities is misguided. Lacking intuition, AI's creativity remains inferior to that of humans. Its reliance on data and predefined rules confines it to executing what it has been programmed to do.

Quality outcomes from AI necessitate human insight and direction, as the foundational algorithms require data that only humans can contextualize. Humans uniquely grasp nuance, sarcasm, and humor-elements that AI struggles to understand-resulting in one-dimensional and monotonous interactions. We are still far from

achieving machine consciousness or artificial general intelligence.

However, the discourse surrounding AI and its repercussions for employment and creativity is intricate. There will always be unforeseen circumstances. In this industrial revolution, as machines become increasingly efficient, they will inevitably displace some jobs. A report by the McKinsey Global Institute predicts that by 2030, approximately 375 million jobs could be lost to automation. This threat extends beyond just white-collar roles; physical labor jobs are equally at risk. Nevertheless, it is important to note that AI will also pave the way for innovative job creation. Consequently, humans will remain essential in the AI development process, as there is no feasible way to construct a wholly automated system.

In summary, artificial intelligence should not be viewed with fear. Instead, it can enhance human creativity by providing access to

vast resources, facilitating adaptive learning, and promoting connectivity and collaboration. AI has the potential to drive productivity and streamline workflows while fostering a culture that harmonizes human imagination, intuition, and empathy with computational power. It represents a significant advancement in creativity and serves as a tool to process enormous amounts of data that exceed human capacity. By integrating intelligence and nuance into automated systems, AI has the potential to enhance human well-being. In this era of technological advancement, understanding AI is paramount. The current generation is poised to uncover exciting domestic, workplace, and political dimensions that will shape future societies, thereby altering the course of civilization. As this generation continues to evolve, the future holds remarkable promise.

*The author is an undergraduate student at Abbottabad University of Science and Technology*



PESHAWAR: The Special Advisor to Chief Minister for Information Barrister Saif presenting a certificate of appreciation to the Deputy Director Information for outstanding performance.

## Athletes' success at Quaid-e-Azam Games hailed

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Rashida Ghaznavi, Additional Director General of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sports Department, has highlighted that effective measures taken to promote sports and discover grassroots talent in the province are delivering positive results. The outstanding performance of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's athletes at the Quaid-e-Azam Games stands as a testament to these efforts. In her statement, Rashida Ghaznavi emphasized that the Sports Department ensures equal facilities for male and female athletes. She explained that, just like their male counterparts, female athletes are given opportunities to refine their skills through training camps organized ahead of the National Games and Inter-Provincial Games. These camps provide daily allowances to female athletes, equal to those provided to male players, fostering fairness and encouragement.

For the ongoing Quaid-e-Azam Inter-Provincial Games in Islamabad, 163 female athletes from 11 different sports disciplines participated in training camps and were given daily allowances for seven days. Rashida Ghaznavi assured athletes that any issues regarding the payment of their allowances could be directly addressed to her or the relevant department. "These athletes are the pride of our province and nation, with the potential to elevate Pakistan's name at national and international levels," she remarked. She further stated that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sports Department is fully committed to improving facilities and support for athletes to ensure the province's talent achieves global recognition.

## Introductory meeting of National Jirga Women Wing held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The introductory meeting of the National Jirga Women Wing was held yesterday in Peshawar City under the chairmanship of Khalid Ayub, Chairman of the National Jirga, and Nasira Ibadat, Chief Organizer of the Women Wing.

The meeting was attended by Mansoor Ahmad Khan, Sajjad Khan Khalil, Qari Musahib Gul, Matiullah Bangash, Sophia, and Shakra Gul.

The participants shared their views on the importance of women in the Jirga movement and their fundamental rights.

During the meeting,

members were given a brief overview of the agenda to promote harmony and awareness about the Jirga.

A large number of women from civil society, minorities, and the public and private sectors took the oath of allegiance to the National Jirga. Those who took the oath included Shakra Gul, Sophia, Dr. Shaheen, Neelam Gul, Rozina Bibi, and Sheerin.

The women expressed solidarity with the Pakhtunkhwa National Jirga, showed confidence in its leadership, and shared their thoughts and suggestions to strengthen the Jirga's future and address public issues and

resources.

They emphasized working beyond any personal interests to serve the public while keeping the current challenges in view and planning the way forward.

The meeting concluded with a Q&A session in which members raised questions about the registration of the Jirga platform, women's designations, strengthening the Jirga in the future, the Jirga's role regarding Parachinar and its condition, participation in legal counsel, and inheritance issues concerning women's rights.

Detailed responses were provided to address these queries.

## KPRA slaps fine on famous restaurant at Namak Mandi

PESHAWAR (APP): Under the directives of Advisor to the Finance Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muzammil Aslam, and Director General of KPRA, Fouzia Iqbal, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority (KPRA) has launched the third phase of its tax enforcement drive in Peshawar.

This phase includes on-site inspections of businesses, examination of records, and immediate issuance of penalties for violations of tax laws.

In this connection, the Additional Collector Central Abdul Raziq Khan,

along with Assistant Collector Shahnawaz Hassan Khan, conducted a surprise visit to a well-known restaurant in Namak Mandi, Peshawar on Saturday night.

Upon reviewing the business's records, the team found that the restaurant had failed to issue sales tax invoices. Consequently, a penalty notice of Rs. 100,000 was issued to the establishment.

Speaking after the visit, the Additional Collector stated that KPRA teams will continue to conduct surprise inspections to ensure strict compliance

with tax regulations, with no compromises on the province's revenue. Businesses, especially restaurants, are urged to issue proper sales tax invoices. Non-compliance will result in penalties under the KPRA Sales Tax on Services Act, 2022.

The KPRA encourages citizens to report any incidents of taxi fraud, tax concealment, or tax evasion through its official WhatsApp number at 0333-1421423. Immediate action will be taken on complaints, and updates on the outcomes will be provided.

## Rs100 increase in BRT Zu card announced

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Urban Mobility Authority (KPUMA) has announced a Rs 100 increase in the price of Zu Card for the Peshawar Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system, the spokesman said on Sunday. The price was increased due to current surge in paper and printing expenditure. The new Zu card is now available at Rs400 after an increase of Rs100, the spokesman said. It is worth mentioning here that the provincial government provided a substantial annual subsidy of Rs 4 billion to BRT. However, the fare for individual rides has been increased by Rs10, a few months back.

# Peshawari Qehwa: A symbol of centuries-old tradition

PESHAWAR (APP): Despite the widespread addition to social media, the centuries-old tradition of enjoying Qehwa (green tea) remains vibrant in Peshawar's iconic Qissa Khwani Bazaar.

This historic market, known as the "Street of Storytellers," continues to serve as a hub of foods with Qahwa for locals seeking warmth and connection on winter nights.

In a time when digital distractions dominate, the comforting ritual of sipping Qehwa offers a moment of respite, with patrons gathering to share stories and conversations that have been passed down through generations in its oldest Qehwa shops.

All the Qehwa Khana of Qissa Khwani that opened from morning till late night draw visitors in substantial numbers on Sunday where they exchanged views about politics, culture, sports and other socioeconomic matters in a relaxed cold weather.

Peshawar's famous Qehwa which was helpful in digestion of varieties of food help foodies after enjoying Chappli Kabab and Matton Karahi.

At Qisakhwani, plenty of shops of Chappli Kabab, Maton Karahi and Qehwa were opened for visitors till late night. "I came from Karak to enjoy the mouth-

watering Chappli Kabab with traditional Qehwa with my friends," said Waris Khan, who came with six school friends from Karak district told APP.

"I had visited many cities of Pakistan but the Peshawari Chappli Kabab along with Qissa Khwani bazaar's Qehwa has impressed me the most," he said.

Qissa Khwani bazaar is one of the oldest bazaars of South Asia where food shops, hotels, and Qehwa Khanas attract a large number of visitors enjoying delectable bites of BBQs, chappli kabab, paye, mutton karahi, fried fish, kabuli pilau and other traditional dishes from morning to till late night.

Known for international storytellers, Qisakhwani's ancient Qehwa shops with traditional wood beds are its unique feature where visitors come in groups and with families for parties to enjoy the delicious cuisines.

"I came along with family to my favourite Qissa Khwani to enjoy its famous chappli kebab and paye with its Qehwa on occasion of birthday of my son," Fayaz Khan, a resident of Waoda Town Nowshera district told APP.

"Whenever I came to Peshawar, I try to come Qisakhwani to enjoy its

delectable cuisines with its famous Qehwa," he said.

"Peshawari Qehwa helps to give warmth inside his body and is a natural remedy for flu, and digestive problems," he said.

Qissa Khwani Bazaar is located in the heart of Peshawar City near historical Chowk Yadgar, Ghanta Ghar and Balahisar Fort. It was a key trade and cultural centre where merchants from the subcontinent, Afghanistan and Central Asia had stayed at night and shared tales of love, culture, art and architecture, music and traditions, before their departure to their respective destinations.

Starting from Kabul Gate, the bazaar takes visitors to the primordial age after witnessing its centuries-old architectural buildings, artisans' shops, restaurants and Qehwa Khanas.

During its peak period, the bazaar served as a campground for trade caravans of merchants from Delhi, Amritsar, Lahore, Kabul, Dushanbe, Ashgabat and Tashkent, who used to enter the city's gates to unload their merchandise.

Witnessed the vigour of great warriors, invaders and kings including Alexander the Great, Mehmood Ghazni, Zaheeruddin Babar and

Nadir Shah, the bazaar also saw the power of King Ahmed Shah Durrani and his grandson Shah Zaman who marched through the famous Khyber Pass during their invasions of India.

Fazl Rehman, owner of the famous Mohmand Qehwa at Shah Wali Qatal Street at Qissa Khwani told APP that he had inherited the business from his father and associated with it for the last 55 years.

"Making Qehwa is my passion which I inherited from my father in 1969 when I was a child and my son has also joined us," Rehman said. "Majority of his customers ask for Qahwa. However, Qahwa with milk — locally Known as Sheen Da Payo — was a special item for parties at Qisakhwani."

The mouthwatering fried fish, chicken roast and kulfi-falooda along with the famous qehwa were adding colours to the parties here.

Rehman said that people still swap tales of culture, music, art, politics and traditional food in Qissa Khwani's tea shops by enjoying the famous cuisines with traditional Qehwa despite growth of social media till late night.

Following the creation of Pakistan, he said, the tea stalls of the bazaar became centres of political discussion where locals

exchanged views about the country's political situation.

He recounted the elections between Fatima Jinnah and Gen Ayub Khan, 1965 Pak-India War, OIC Lahore Summit 1974, and a number of sports and cultural events including the 1992 cricket world cup as some of the most hotly discussed topics at the bazaars many tea shops and stalls.

Bakhtzada Khan, research officer Archaeology Department said that Qissa Khwani's history is believed to be as old as the history of Peshawar. He said the recent archaeology excavation at ancient Gor Khatri established the city's historical profile declaring Peshawar as 'Oldest Living City' in South Asia with a primitive history going back to about 539 BC."

The Gor Khatri excavation is the deepest and biggest in the world, which revealed that the 20 layers of soil provide a complete profile of this ancient city ranging from British to pre-Indo-Greek era.

Thus, he said the unique tradition of storytelling and drinking of Qehwa became an integral part of Qissa Khwani culture since primitive era, which is still continuing despite social media onslaught.

Besides Qahwa, foreign

and domestic tourists can also take glimpses of the ancestral houses of Bollywood superstars including Yousaf Khan alias Dalip Kumar at Mohallah Khudadad, Haveli of Raj Kapoor's father Prithvi Raj and residence of Shah Rukh Khan's family at Shah Wali Qatal Qissa Khwani.

The Haveli of Raj Kapoor's father Prithvi Raj, who moved to Mumbai in 1930 where he prevailed over the South Asian film industry both as an actor and producer — laying the first Bollywood dynasty spanned about four generations — also serves as a major attraction for visitors at Dhaki Nalbandi near Qissa Khwani.

The house of Taj Muhammad Khan, father of Bollywood legend Shah Rukh Khan was located at Shah Wali Katal Qissa Khawani where his celebrated son had a good time with his family members.

The Qehwa shops confront of arched white marble monument erected in the middle of the bazaar to honour all those martyred in the Qissa Khwani massacre by British troops in 1930, also remained the centre of attraction for many.

British Commissioner of Peshawar, Herbert Edwards had a special love

for Qissa Khwani who called it the 'Piccadilly of South Asia'. During colonial rule, Britishers used informers to know public opinion over administrative decisions by instructing them to visit city areas and bring 'Qissa Khawani Gazzatte' and enjoyed Qehwa with Chappli Kabab.

"Qissakhwani had witnessed a sharp decrease in the arrival of tourists during 2001-13 when terrorists targeted this cultural hub of Peshawar that claimed so many precious lives including Senior Minister Bashir Ahmed Bilour in 2012 and CCPO Malik Muhammad Saad Shaheed in 2007" said Fazalur Rehman.

In spite of economic losses caused by terrorism and COVID-19, he said that its traders continued their business even in those hard days when people were afraid to visit this ancient bazaar.

"Qisakhwani is the identity of Peshawar and solid efforts are required to preserve its cultural heritage, architecture, artwork, and substantial revenue could be generated by maintaining its beauty and primitive heritage," said Shaukat Ali Khan, Chairman Central Organization for Traders Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He said about Rs80,000 per 50kg are being spent on

the import of green tea most of which comes from Vietnam.

Shoukat shared that this amount could be saved by facilitating investors and farmers to cultivate green tea in upper KP, especially in Malakand and Hazara divisions.

He urged the government to give special financial incentives to investors for the purchase of machinery for tea cultivation, harvesting, and the maintenance of Qissakhwani.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has completed the 'Cultural Heritage Trail' project in 2018 in Peshawar under which 500 meters long trail from ancient Ghanta Ghar to Gor Khatri and the outlook of 85 heritage buildings including the famous Sethi House at Mohalla Sethian near Qissa Khwani were renovated and preserved.

Starting at historical Ghanta Ghar, the trail passes through ancient Mohallah Sethian with a number of beautiful houses constructed by the Sethi family back in the 1880s that were preserved.

The experts underlined the need of highlighting such rich traditions and historical places through digital media to attract foreign tourists and contribute in the country's economic growth.





## In brief

### Three killed in Takht-i-Bahi

MARDAN (INP): A woman and two other members of the same family were gunned down over a property dispute in district Mardan's Takht-i-Bahi area. According to police, three members of the same family were shot dead over a property dispute. The bodies of two victims including father and son have been shifted to hospital. The police in an initial statement said that the accused and victims are relatives. Further investigation was underway in the case.

### Benazir Kafaalat payments begins

MULTAN (APP): The distribution of second quarterly tranche of Rs 10,500 per beneficiary for October-December has begun in Khanewal district, under Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP). Zonal Director for South Zone Punjab, Ms. Sayama Bashir, confirmed that the payment process had been organized through 12 designated campsites in the district. These camps include three in Tehsil Khanewal, four in Kabirwala, three in Mian Channu, and two in Jahanian, for the convenience of 176,513 registered beneficiaries. Beneficiaries facing any issue could visit the nearest BISP Tehsil office or contact the toll-free helpline at 0800-26477 for assistance. Ms. Bashir emphasized that all official communications from BISP were sent through 8171, warning the public to disregard messages from any other number. Strict measures had been adopted to ensure a smooth and transparent disbursement process. Staff have been directed to prevent unauthorized deductions and provide respectful service to all women beneficiaries. Designated officials are monitoring campsites and would take swift action against any agents involved in unlawful activities, she added. The initiative reflects BISP's commitment to empowering women through timely financial assistance and safeguarding their rights during the disbursement process.

### Seminar on Hemophilia

SIALKOT (APP): A seminar titled "Hemophilia Awareness" was held here at Govt College Women University Sialkot (GCWUS) to educate participants about its symptoms, treatment options and early diagnosis. The seminar was organized by the GCWUS' Zoology department in collaboration with Diya Welfare Organization, says a news release issued here on Sunday. Guest speakers including medical professionals and representatives from Diya Welfare Organization delivered insightful presentations on the causes, symptoms and management of hemophilia. They emphasized the importance of blood donations and community support in improving the quality of life for patients. Students and faculty members of the department of Zoology actively participated in the interactive Q&A sessions, showcasing their keen interest and commitment to learning about this critical health issue.

### 7 gamblers apprehended

MUZAFFARGARH (APP): Police claimed on Sunday to have arrested seven people for gambling and recovered stake money from their possession. In a crackdown, Shahr Sultan police conducted a raid and arrested seven gamblers and recovered stake money of Rs 55,000, mobile phones and other paraphernalia from them.



HYDERABAD: Renowned singer Sanam Marvi performs on stage at the Ayaz Festival held at Sindh Museum.

## Barakwal Visits Khushal Khan Khattak University

### F.P. Report

KARAK: The Minister of Agriculture, Major Muhammad Sajjad Barakwal, visited the Main Campus of Khushal Khan Khattak University in Karak.

During his visit, the Minister expressed his full support for the university's ongoing development initiatives and

personally inspected the progress of various construction projects currently underway.

He commended the efforts of Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Naseer Ud Din and Registrar Dr. Ghani Ur Rehman for their dedication and proactive role in driving the university's growth.

He acknowledged their significant contributions

and expressed appreciation for their keen interest in ensuring the successful implementation of key development projects.

The Minister's visit underscores the government's commitment to supporting higher education in the region and promoting a conducive environment for academic excellence at Khushal Khan Khattak University.

## Jailed Pakistani professor reaches home

### F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Prof Dr Nowsher Khan, a Pakistani professor imprisoned in Saudi Arabia for a controversial tweet against Egyptian President General Al-Sisi and King Salman bin Abdulaziz reached home in Samarbagh here on Sunday after his release from the jail in Saudi Arabia.

According to his relative, the Pakistan professor at the King Khalid University, KSA spent about seven years in jail. He arrived in Pakistan after serving a long sentence of seven years.

According to his relatives, Professor Dr. Nowsher Khan, a resident of Samarbagh in Lower Dir, had allegedly tweeted a controversial tweet in favor of the late Egyptian President Morsi blaming General Al-Sisi for his killing and had also condemned King Salman bin Abdulaziz.

After an investigation he was arrested by the KSA authorities. It should be noted that after his arrest, he was missing for several years and then it was found that he was in prison.

As soon as the news of Professor Dr Nowsher Khan's release was received, there was a wave of joy among his family and the public. Dr. Nowsher Khan had a PhD in Computer Science from Malaysia and was working as an assistant professor at Abdul Wali Khan University.

From here, he took leave and was appointed as a professor of Computer Science at King Khalid University.

TIMBER LOGS SEIZED: The Samarbagh administration during an operation against timber smuggling, recovered a total of 50 timber logs here on Sunday.

The assistant commissioner Zeeshan Najib along with the additional assistant commissioner Samarbagh Younus Khan raided a market and recovered 50 precious logs.

## Rs26bn projects approved by ex-CM shelved: JI

### F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Jamaat-i-Islami North chief and former senior minister Inayatullah Khan has alleged the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief minister Ali Amin Gandaphur has shelved the developmental projects approved by the former chief minister Mahmood Khan for Malakand division worth of Rs 26 billion. He was addressing a function after taking oath of his new responsibilities as chief at Gulabad Adenzai here the other day. The JI newly leaders and workers from all districts, including former MNAs Maulana Asadullah from Lower Dir, Sahibzada Tariqullah from Upper Dir, Sahibzada Yaqub Khan, Abdul Akbar Chitrali from Chitral, Syed Bakhtiar Maani from Malakand, former MPAs Malik Behram Khan, Shah Raz Khan and Muhammad Amin were also present on the occasion.

The JI provincial chief said that peace had been disturbed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as innocent people, police officials and political leaders were being killed in parts of the province.

He said the rulers had left the public on the mercy of target killers and militants.

Mr Inayat said the JI believed in serving the

people without discrimination of colour, race, or creed, and without power or seat. He said they would raise the voice of people on every front for the rights of the oppressed people of Palestine and Syria. Terming the federal and provincial governments as incompetent, he said the country was in decline and millions of people were forced to go abroad because the country's economy was in doldrum and there was no successor to the country.

"The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf has been in power in the province for the past 13 years but the province is indebted to the tune of Rs. 1000 billion", the JI leader said, adding the rulers were turning a blind eye to the problems of the people by only holding sit-ins.

He said the law-and-order situation in all districts of Malakand division, especially in the merged and southern districts, was extremely precarious. He said that Pakistan had the highest number of youths but they too were in despair due to flawed policies of the governments.

The JI leader complained the sitting KP government had shelved several development projects including the Dir and Swat Motorway, Dir University, Timergara to Dir Khas Road and other projects. He said the JI was deliberately deprived of represen-

tation in parliament by some unseen forces, but very soon it would raise the issue in the court of the people.

PROTEST ENDED: The protesting paramedics after successful talks with local administration and MPA Ubaid ur Rehman announced to end their protest against the administration for allegedly misbehaving with the paramedic staff at Samarbagh. The assistant commissioner Samarbagh Zeeshan Najib and chairman district development advisory committee, MPA Ubaid ur Rehman held talks with the protesting staff and convinced them to end their protest. Speaking on the occasion the district president of Paramedical Association Matiullah said that the additional assistant commissioner Samarbagh Younus Khan had misbehaved with one of the paramedics during a raid in the market.

He said the health workers would never tolerate any discriminatory and insulting attitude of the administration.

The association then held a protest sit-in against the administration. Taking notice of the matter, the AC Zeeshan Najib and MPA Ubaid ur Rehman reached the venue and held talks with the protesting paramedics. After successful talks the paramedics ended their protest.

## Sports are integral part of education: DEO Kohat

### F.P. Report

KOHAT: Sports are an integral part of the education and those students having interest in sports side by side their education, have a tremendous career in their life.

These views were expressed by the District Education Officer (DEO) Kohat Zahoor Ahmad Khan while addressing the prize distribution ceremony of the Annual Sports of the Zone as a chief guest, at Government High School Sheraki, Darra Adam Khel, Kohat.

The ceremony beside the Schools Principals, was also attended by the stu-

dents, teachers and elites of the area in large number.

The DEO in his address said that regular sports activities keeps a person healthy and fit both physically and mentally. Sports not only make the body healthy and energetic but also a source of entertainment, he added. He continued, the players prepared in these small playgrounds are brightening the prize of the nation globally and they are considered to be the Ambassadors of the country. Zahoor Khan maintained that sports and education are interlinked as sports are the main source of a healthier brain.

Later the DEO distrib-

uted Trophies and Shields amongst the best performing Principals, Technical Officials and Players.

Meanwhile, District Administration Kohat to Host "Pakistan Zindabad Aman Tanga Rally" District Administration Kohat has organized a unique program of its kind "Pakistan Zindabad Aman Tanga Rally" on Tuesday 24th December at 3 pm under the supervision of the Deputy Commissioner Kohat Abdul Akram Chitrali in collaboration with the Kohat Cement Company. The Tanga Rally will be participated by the beautiful Tangas and the enthusiasts of the city.

## Fanos Gujor 6th anniversary observed

### F.P. Report

BUNER: The 6th death anniversary of the progressive revolutionary leader Quaid Awami Workers Party Pakistan late Fano Gujjar was celebrated with great enthusiasm here at Swari on Sunday. In the grand gathering, the central

leader of Awami Workers Party Madam Shazia Khan hundreds leaders and comrades participated from Sindh, Punjab, Balochistan, Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa every district.

While party leaders and workers from Buner, along with leaders and

workers of other political parties also participated in large numbers. Quaid's political successor, Usman Fanoos Gujjar, stood at the main gate and welcomed them and stayed with the guests on the stage and bid see off to everyone on their return and thanked everyone.

## Blue Pottery—Reviving a dying ancient art

MULTAN (APP): Costly apparatus, lack of finances and diminishing skilled labor had put the unique and globally acknowledged Blue Pottery and Kashigari profession under threat despite efforts to preserve this centuries old art by a few working hands and the government institutions.

The Kashigari (designing) work on pots is a traditional art of South Punjab. The blue pottery art originated from China and reached sub-continent through Iran. Similarly, when Arabs entered Sindh Valley and Muhammad Bin Qasim conquered Multan in 712 A.D, he was also accompanied by some experts of "Kashi".

About word Kashigari, it is related to "Koshan", the famous city of Iran and "Kashgar", a popular city of China. The art became very popular and was transferred from one generation to another over the decades.

As commonly this art involves costly material and skillful workers, heirs of the past expert families gradually converted to other modes of earning showing least interest to their ancestral profession.

"Blue pots manufacturing is not an easy task. It required proper skill and commitment," stated Muhammad Imran, a master Kashigari. "Its various operations body formation, filtration, slip formation, casting, pug milling, jiggering, cutting and joining, drying, finishing, biscuit firing, kashi, cleaning,



glazing and glost firing need untiring efforts and high skillfulness."

He informed that pots were baked on 1200 Celsius degree and temperature is increased very slowly to save pots from cracking. "We prepare quality products and can earn sufficient income if there is proper marketing for export of our pottery."

About challenge, he said, it is difficult to install new unit for blue pots because it requires minimum Rs five million.

Blue pottery is also a microcosm of the Sufi mausoleums dotting Multan and Sindh with its motifs taken from Persian and Turkic calligraphy and miniatures. But, despite its popularity, artisans face challenges like limited access to resources, economic instability and competition with mass-produced goods.

Artisan Allah Rakha, engaged in this business for years also sees vast potential in this sector but he complained of electricity and gas tariff.

"As this pottery reflects our culture abroad and we can also earn sufficient revenue with their exports, the government should incentivize this sector," he said. "Cost of gas and electricity sometimes become unbearable. It adds to our expenditure as well as shrink profit and affect exports."

He also complained of customs authorities who he said, open up the shipment carelessly sometimes breaking our pottery. "Similarly once opened each and every item, it is very difficult to pack them again in the same manner as packed at factories."

Multan's blue pottery has gained international recognition, with collectors and enthu-



siasts from around the world appreciating its beauty and craftsmanship. The demand for these pieces continues to grow, boosting the craft's global profile.

But with modernization of society and changing traditions, this art gradually reached the verge of extinction. Although Institute of Blue Pottery Development (IBPD) Multan was striving hard to keep this art alive and promoting cultural identity of the region, yet some more measures were needed to facilitate artisans and streamline its marketing and exports.

Manager and Deputy Manager of the Institute mentioned to different initiatives for protection and growth of this sector.

"Our institute provides training to students, offer common facility services to local blue pottery manufacturing units,"

informed Asad Khan, Manager IBPD. "We also conduct research, exploration of cheapest pottery raw material and develop suitable designs that depict our culture and history and meet modern day requirements."

Asad said the favorite color of these experts is blue. "Multan has hundreds of shrines and other historic buildings and all these buildings contained three shades of the blue colour."

Deputy Manager, Naveed Jameel said the Institute of Blue Pottery Development was preparing over 200 articles including complete range of dinner-set, water-set, tea-set, soup-set, show-pieces, planters and many other things.

"IBPD purchases raw clay from Tharparkar, Swat and Quetta. Blue pots are much liked by people, especially elite

class and foreigners," he said. "Similarly, blue pots are also favorite choice of big hotels and restaurants."

Naveed said, IBPD was playing important role in revival of blue pots and has imparted training to hundreds of students. "Our institute started classes in 2006. Students are also given scholarships in line with different programs of Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA)."

He informed that at present 100 students were availing training facility in Kashigari, Mould making, Casting and Firing Techniques in Ceramics as the Institute is also working on Ceramics-I, Computer Graphics, Art and Designing Specialization in Kashigari, Sculpture, Calligraphy, Auto CAD/CCA courses.

Naveed said good number of university students also learn Kashigari at our Institute as IBPD also provide students internship opportunity. "Ambassadors from various countries also visit our Institute and express interest in blue pottery."

Since this profession has potential to grow within the country and abroad, therefore, the concerned departments must pay proper heed in its promotion to help earn artisans respectable living as well as bring foreign exchange to national kitty by exploring export markets.





# Suspect in German Christmas market attack held on murder charges

MAGDEBURG (Reuters): A man suspected of ploughing a car through crowds at a German Christmas market in an attack that killed five people and injured scores faces multiple charges of murder and attempted murder, police said on Sunday.

Friday evening's attack in the central city of Magdeburg shocked the country and stirred up tensions over the charged issue of immigration.

The suspect, who was in custody, is a 50-year-old psychiatrist from Saudi Arabia with a history of anti-Islamic rhetoric who has lived in Germany for almost two decades. The motive for the attack remained unclear.

There were scuffles and some "minor disturbances" at a far-right demonstration attended by around 2,100 people on Saturday night in Magdeburg, police said. They added that criminal proceedings would follow, but did not give details.

Protesters, some wearing black balaclavas, held up a large banner with the word "remigration", a term popular with supporters of the far right who seek the mass deportation of immigrants and people deemed not ethnically German.

Other residents gathered to pay their respects to the dead. A sea of flowers stretched out in front of St

John's Church in Magdeburg, close to the scene of the crime, which attracted a steady stream of tearful mourners over the weekend.

"This is my second time here. I was here yesterday. I brought flowers and it moved me so much and I had to know today how many flowers were brought," local resident Ingolf Klinzmann told Reuters.

A sign commemorating the victims bore in large lettering the word "Why?".

A magistrate ordered the suspect, identified in German media as Taleb A., into pretrial custody on charges of murder on five counts as well as multiple counts of attempted murder and grievous bodily harm, police said in a statement.

Reuters could not immediately ascertain if the suspect had a lawyer.

Those killed were a nine-year-old boy and four women aged 52, 45, 75 and 67, the police statement said. Among the wounded, around 40 had serious or critical injuries.

Authorities said the suspected attacker used emergency exit points to drive onto the grounds of the Christmas market, where he picked up speed and ploughed into the crowds, hitting more than 200 people in a three-minute attack. He was arrested at the scene.

German authorities have not named the suspect and German media reports have given his name only as Taleb A. in keeping with local privacy laws.

MOTIVE UNCLEAR

Interior Minister Nancy Faeser said in a statement on Sunday that the criminal investigation would leave no stone unturned.

"The task is to piece together all findings and paint a picture of this perpetrator, who does not fit any existing mould," Faeser said.

"This perpetrator acted in an unbelievably cruel and brutal manner - like an Islamist terrorist, although he was clearly ideologically hostile to Islam," she added.

The suspect had been strongly critical of German authorities as well as Islam in the past. He had also appeared in a number of media interviews in recent years reporting on his work helping Saudi Arabians who had turned their back on Islam to flee to Europe.

He had voiced support on social media platform X for the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party and for U.S. billionaire Elon Musk, who has backed the AfD.

The AfD has strong support in the former East Germany where Magdeburg is located. Opinion polls put it in second place nationally ahead

of elections in February.

Its members, including the candidate for chancellor Alice Weidel, planned a rally in Magdeburg on Monday evening.

Saudi Arabia had repeatedly flagged to Germany concerns over posts on the suspect's social media, according to a Saudi source and a German security source.

The Christian Democrats, Germany's main opposition party, and the Free Democrats, who were part of the coalition government until its collapse last month, called for improvements to Germany's security apparatus, including better coordination between federal and state authorities.

"The background must be clarified. But above all, we must do more to prevent such offences, especially as there were obviously specific warnings and tips in this case that were ignored," Sahra Wagenknecht, leader of the leftist BSW party, told the Welt newspaper.

The BSW, a new political party with far-left roots, has also condemned unchecked immigration and has gained considerable support ahead of the Feb. 23 election.

Chancellor Olaf Scholz, whose Social Democrats are trailing in opinion polls, attended a service for victims in Magdeburg's cathedral on Saturday.



SANDRINGHAM, UNITED KINGDOM: King Charles III departs after attending the 4th Sunday of Advent service at the Church of St Mary Magdalene on the Sandringham estate on Sunday.

# India child marriage crackdown reaches nearly 5,000 arrests

GUWAHATI (AFP): A crackdown on illegal child marriages in India's north-east has resulted in nearly 5,000 arrests, after 416 people were detained in the latest police sweep, a minister said Sunday.

"We will continue to take bold steps to end this social evil," Himanta Biswa Sarma, chief minister of Assam state, said in a statement.

"Assam continues its fight against child marriage," he added, saying

raids have been carried out overnight and that those arrested would be produced in court on Sunday.

India is home to more than 220 million child brides, according to the United Nations, but the number of child weddings has fallen dramatically this century.

Assam state had already arrested thousands in earlier abolition drives that began in February 2023, including parents of

married couples and registrars who signed off on underage betrothals.

It takes the total now arrested to more than 4,800 people.

Sarma has campaigned on a platform of stamping out child marriages completely in his state by 2026.

The legal marriage age in India is 18 but millions of children are forced to tie the knot when they are younger, particularly in poorer rural areas.

Many parents marry off their children in the hope of improving their financial security.

The results can be devastating, with girls dropping out of school to cook and clean for their husbands, and suffering health problems from giving birth at a young age.

In a landmark 2017 judgement, India's top court said that sex with an underage wife constituted rape, a ruling cheered by activists.

# Small plane crashes into Brazilian tourist city, killing at least 10

GRAMADO, BARZIL (Reuters): A small plane with 10 people aboard crashed into shops in the center of the tourist city of Gramado in southern Brazil on Sunday, civil defense officials said, and initial reports indicated that there were no survivors.

"Unfortunately, initial reports indicate that the aircraft's occupants did not

survive," Governor Eduardo Leite said in a post on social media platform X.

According to the public security office of Rio Grande do Sul state, at least 15 people were taken to the city's hospital, most of them suffering from smoke inhalation caused by the fire triggered by the crash.

The plane reportedly first struck the chimney of a building, then the second floor of a house, before crashing into a furniture store, authorities said. Debris also reached a nearby inn.

Nestled in a mountainous region, Gramado is the most popular tourist destination in Rio Grande do Sul, which was severely

impacted earlier this year by unprecedented floods that claimed dozens of lives, destroyed infrastructure and significantly disrupted the state's economy.

The accident occurred just days before Christmas, a particularly busy period for the city, which is traditionally adorned with decorations and hosts festive events.

# Ivanka Trump is done with politics and says she isn't coming back

WASHINGTON (CNN): For Ivanka Trump's entire adult life, she worked for her father.

When Donald Trump was a real estate mogul, she was designing his next hotel. When he was on a reality TV show, she was in his television boardroom. When he was running for office, she was on the campaign trail. When he was president, she had an office in the West Wing.

But in January of 2021, for the first time since she was 23 years old, she left Washington - and his employ.

Ivanka Trump is done with politics and says she isn't coming back.

"I love my father very much. This time around I am choosing to prioritize my young children and the private life we are creating as a family. I do not plan to be involved in politics," she said in a 2022 social media post after her father announced his third run for the presidency.

That statement remains true after Donald Trump's 2024 victory, sources close to Ivanka Trump said, as she and her husband, Jared Kushner, seek a relatively private life in Miami, Florida, where they've spent the past four years largely outside of the public spotlight.

It marks a dramatic turnaround for one of the former and future president's closest aides, but an intentional one after the first four bruising years in the White House.

Ivanka Trump faced constant scrutiny and criticism for decisions made by her father that she was unable to wholly influence or moderate. She was alienated by some liberal friends in her New York social circle, and she shut down a relatively successful eponymous clothing and accessories brand amid persistent ethics questions. Her departure from politics means her father is no longer her boss - and she is forging a new path with a definitively different lifestyle, one made possible as her family's businesses have profited from proximity to the presidency and resulting relationships.

"Politics is - it's a pretty dark world. There's a lot of darkness, a lot of negativity, and it's just really at odds with what feels good for me as a human being," she told "The Lex Fridman Podcast" in a three-hour conversation this July. "And you know, it's a really rough business. So for me and my family, it feels right to not participate," she added in what was her most substantive public reflection on her time in Washington and her life after.

Still, a private life may prove elusive as a high-profile member of America's incoming first family, one with a carefully cultivated personal brand and significant influence, beloved to many of the president-

elect's supporters and a target of many of his detractors.

Trump remains very close with her father, with whom she talks regularly, a source close to her said. And she is likely to continue to informally advise him on a range of issues behind-the-scenes, sources told CNN.

"She's still his daughter, and a trusted voice, so in that sense an informal adviser, as we all are with our family members," said Maggie Cordish, a longtime friend who joined Trump in the West Wing for a year working on paid family leave issues.

During her time in the White House, staff and advisers took care to highlight her successes and counsel to the president. There was a robust public relations effort at times over those four years to ensure she got credit for her work - and distance from less popular policies.

She publicly maintained a neatly tailored West Wing portfolio, turning her focus to less polarizing issues like criminal justice reform, combating human trafficking and workforce development.

"Ivanka proudly spearheaded the White House's efforts and promoted the administration's success" on those policies, a representative for Trump said in a statement to CNN.

Perhaps the work that left the most significant mark on Republican policy was her efforts toward paid family leave legislation and a child tax credit for working families.

"She made those Republican issues. Really, they had not been Republican issues," said a former colleague.

This time around, sources said, her advice to her father is likely to stay under the radar.

A source familiar with her thinking said that if Trump chooses to weigh in and have influence during her father's second term, "It's never going to be something that people are going to see publicly."

For his part, Kushner is also declining a formal role in the incoming administration, but is expected to be a pivotal outside adviser to Donald Trump's Middle East efforts, leveraging his close relationships with regional leaders. He also has significant financial interests in the region.

And in a sign of the president-elect's implicit trust in his family members, Jared Kushner's father, Charles Kushner, has been selected as US ambassador to France.

From 'her apparent' to jiu-jitsu

Toward the end of Trump's first term, Ivanka Trump had emerged as a more combative figure, adopting a posture aligned with her father as she lambasted what she cast as "partisan investigations." She described herself as "unapologetically" opposed to

abortion rights, and at the time, sources predicted a future run for political office, with one source who worked with the Trump family saying that Donald Trump viewed his daughter as "her apparent."

But the end of the first Trump term marked necessary change for the family: Her father was largely exiled from Washington in the aftermath of January 6, 2021, and they left behind the drama of the nation's capital for sunnier skies and Florida's more welcoming political climate.

Her decision to leave the political fray may have also been shaped by more challenging personal moments over the past four years. Ivana Trump, her beloved mother, unexpectedly passed away at her New York City home in July 2022.

"The loss of a parent is one of life's very painful passages for which one is never fully prepared. It hits at the very core of your being. And it takes a good amount of time to emerge from how it dislocates you," she wrote in an Instagram post reflecting on her first holiday season since her mother's death.

She has also been caring for her 98-year-old maternal grandmother, known as "Babi," who lives with the family in Miami.

And her husband has also contended with health issues, revealing in his 2022 memoir that he was diagnosed with thyroid cancer in 2019 and had surgery to remove a growth on his thyroid. Kushner had a second thyroid surgery in August 2022, a source close to him told Reuters at the time.

Friends describe a gradual shift from Trump's more public-facing and aggressive posture to her current position beginning with the family's January 2021 move to Miami, where they settled into an oceanfront condo in the Surfside area before later relocating to a mansion in the exclusive Indian Creek Island enclave.

Multiple friends say she's at peace with her decision to step away from politics, telling CNN that she is prioritizing her family, attempting to find some privacy, and pursuing new interests.

"Her children are in a sweet spot where they're all critical ages, they're tweens and teens, and it's short - it's really brief. She loves being with her children, and she's found a lot of peace and happiness in her private life," said Cordish.

Trump has tapped into a wide-ranging series of new hobbies. Her social media posts are peppered with images of her and her family gardening, practicing jiu-jitsu at the Valente Brothers' studio, learning to surf at Kelly Slater's Surf Ranch, playing polo on horseback, driving motocross bikes and playing board games.

# China takes steps against Canada institutions, individuals

BEIJING (Reuters): China said on Sunday it was taking countermeasures against two Canadian institutions and 20 people involved in human rights issues concerning the Uyghurs and Tibet.

The measures, which took effect on Saturday, include asset freezes and bans on entry and the targets include Canada's Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project and the Canada-

Tibet Committee, China's foreign ministry announces on its website.

Rights groups accuse Beijing of widespread abuses of Uyghurs, a mainly Muslim ethnic minority that numbers around 10 million in the western region of Xinjiang, including the mass use of forced labour in camps. Beijing denies any abuses.

China seized control of

Tibet in 1950 in what it describes as a "peaceful liberation" from feudalistic serfdom. International human rights groups and exiles, however, have routinely condemned what they call China's oppressive rule in Tibetan areas.

For the two institutions, China said it is freezing their "movable property, immovable property and other types of property within the territory of

China". It is freezing the property in China of 15 people in the Uyghur institution and five on the Tibet committee, banning them from entering China, including Hong Kong and Macau.

Calls to the Canadian embassy in Beijing went unanswered. Reuters did not receive an immediate response from the rights groups or Global Affairs Canada.

# Why did at least 67 people die in Christmas charity stampedes in struggling Nigeria?

ABUJA, Nigeria (AP): Stampedes during three Christmas charity events across Nigeria have left at least 67 people dead in the past week, many of them children. Families are struggling during the country's worst cost-of-living crisis in a generation.

At least 35 children were killed in southwestern Oyo state on Wednesday. And on Saturday, 22 people died in southeastern Anambra state while 10 died in the capital, Abuja, where more than 1,000 people had gathered at a church to receive clothes and food.

Here's why people in Africa's most populous country are risking their lives for holiday donations.

Inflation at a 28-year high

"There is hunger in this Nigeria. Every Nigerian needs food," one woman, in tears, told the local Arise television after the stampede in Abuja.

The economic crisis is blamed on the government's policies to save money and attract investors, which have contributed to pushing the inflation rate to a 28-year high of 34.6%. Meanwhile the naira currency languishes at record lows against the dollar.

At least 63% of Nigeria's more than 210 million people population is poor, according to the government's

statistics office. The government has struggled to create jobs. And when people gather to protest hardship, security forces are quick to clamp down. In August, more than 20 people were shot dead by security forces during nationwide protests.

"The average Nigerian has seen food go out of their reach," said Cheta Nwanze, managing partner at the Lagos-based SBM Intelligence research firm. In 2022, the firm found that about 97% of Nigerians spend up to 63% of their income on food, but that share must have grown since then, he said. Some of those who died in Abuja had waited overnight outside the church in cold weather for the chance to enter early, according to Loveth Inyang, a witness who rescued a baby from the crush.

Security is costly, too

Deadly stampedes are not new in Nigeria and are often caused by lack of adherence to public safety measures. But analysts say people's desperation to survive is making crowd control more difficult.

Accounts from witnesses and police in Abuja and Anambra showed that the stampedes occurred before the events started as people tried to secure prime positions.

In Abuja, the church was forced to cancel the event, leaving bags of rice

and clothing items inside.

Organizers of such charity events often do not consider security a priority, said Ademola Adetuberu, who runs the Abuja-based Barricade Executive Protection security firm.

Meanwhile, the number of events is increasing as philanthropists and organizations try to meet the growing demand for food.

"If organizers of such events brainstorm more, get professionals to advise them and have a budget for security, this can be prevented," Adetuberu said. How authorities are responding

Nigeria's President Bola Tinubu has asked authorities to no longer tolerate "operational lapses" by organizers of such events, while police have made it mandatory for organizers to get prior permission before hosting them.

But such commitments are not new and usually difficult to enforce, analysts said.

"People's incomes have been squeezed through the entire year. When they hear somewhere that food is being distributed, their natural instinct is to go," Nwanze said. "Add this to our notoriously poor queue culture and you have the perfect storm that will lead to such a stampede."





The Frontier Post

Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

Printed and published by Mahmood Afridi at Moraka's

Printers, 27 Abdara Road, University Town, Peshawar.

Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001

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

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

USA and Canada Toll Free Number 1-800-5905747

## Guns in Lebanon should be in the hands of its army only

**D**ESPITE the dire economic straits in which their country finds itself, for many in Lebanon \$25 not an impossible sum to get together. That is the current asking price for one of the black-market AK-47 assault rifles flooding the troubled country after collapse of the Syrian army. The growing availability of these weapons in a country already awash with guns should alarm everyone who wants to see Lebanon turn a corner on instability, invasion and inertia.

On Wednesday, The National spoke to a Lebanese security source who confirmed that local dealers were taking advantage of the upheaval across the border to buy and smuggle in cheap firearms. "The northern region of the country is now full of Syrian arms," the source said.

That some Lebanese feel the need to arm themselves with unregistered guns is not new; it is a symptom of the country's many serious domestic problems. A report released last year by the Global Organised Crime Index found that many Lebanese "turn to 'self-security' to protect themselves and their families by purchasing arms on the black market". The demand for weapons "surged in the aftermath of the port explosion in Beirut in August 2020", it added.

The sudden influx of firearms from Syria has left the authorities worried, understandably, about the consequences. If the Lebanese state is to re-establish its monopoly on the use of force and regain the trust of the public, the Lebanese Armed Forces must be empowered to contain this phenomenon.

Lebanon's army is under great strain and has been for years. As Sami Halabi of the Lebanese think tank Badil wrote in The National earlier this year: "Institutional bloat, accusations of graft and political infighting have rendered the LAF highly dysfunctional, with little capacity to secure the country at large, let alone one of the world's most volatile borders."

It is clear that this national symbol of Lebanese statehood – one that, importantly for Lebanon, transcends sectarian lines – must be enabled to do its job properly. Implementing UN Security Resolution 1701 to disarm Hezbollah and ensure the monopoly over the use of arms with the state is vital – and is part of the current ceasefire deal with Israel.

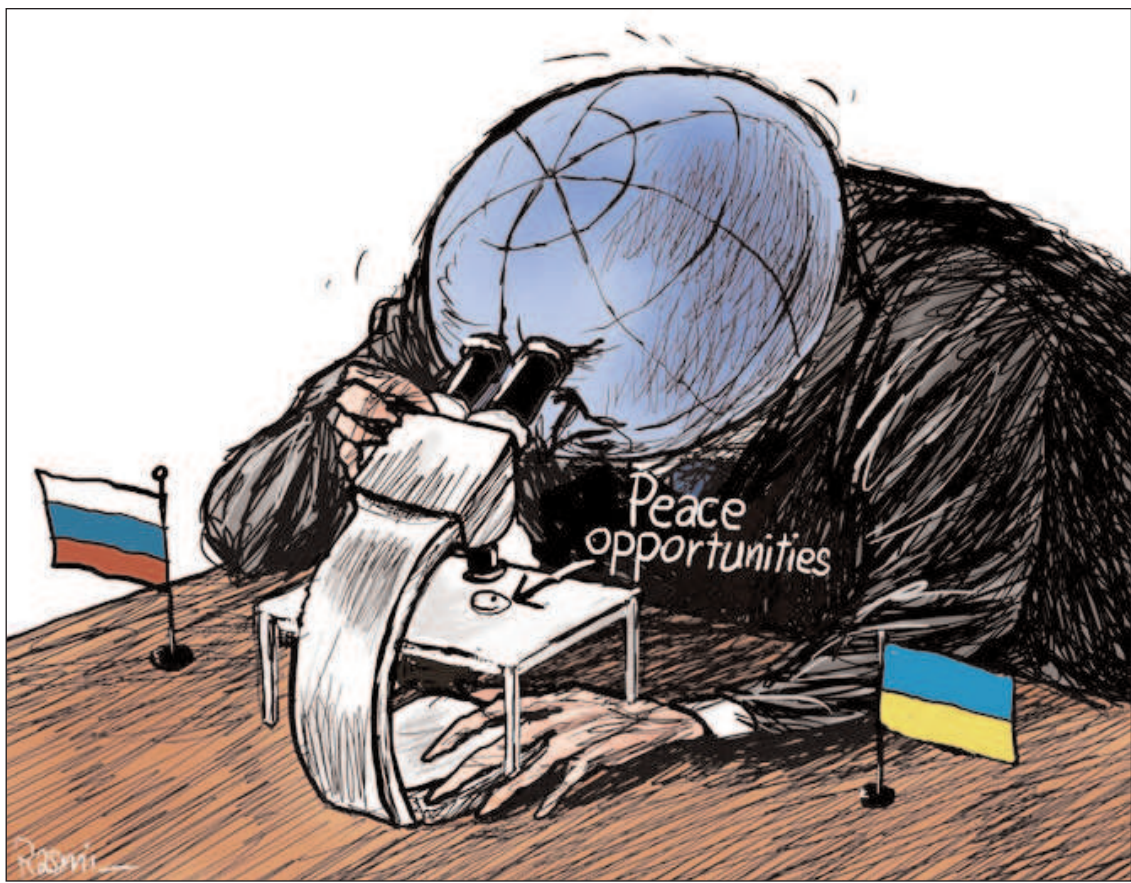
Some countries have already promised to help, with nations meeting at a donor conference in Paris in October promising \$200 million for Lebanon's security forces. During a visit to Abu Dhabi earlier this month, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said the UK would support the initial training of hundreds of Lebanese army recruits and provide equipment through contractors to bolster its ability to maintain security in the south of the country. On the same day, 62 armoured personnel carriers donated by Jordan arrived in Beirut.

These are all worthy steps but even more support is needed, given the sobering array of tasks facing Lebanon's military. The sudden influx of illegal guns from Syria only adds to a complicated situation in which Israeli troops are still on Lebanese territory and Hezbollah militants remain active. The armed forces also need to be ready to fulfil their stabilising role in partnership with UN peacekeepers.

International support for the army is more likely to be forthcoming if donor countries see that Lebanon is heading to having a fully functioning government and a new president in place. Political leadership and an army that is fit for purpose are vital if Lebanon is to, one day, become a country where some citizens don't feel that they have no choice but to arm themselves.

### Important Notice

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



## Trump 2.0 and the Russia-Ukraine conflict

Luke Coffey

**A**s Europe gets used to the fact that President Donald Trump is returning to the White House, many are wondering what this means for the war in Ukraine and the future of NATO. Almost three years into the conflict, Russia's invasion of Ukraine remains the most consequential moment in transatlantic security since the Second World War.

This has been a critical year for the war. In 2024, Russia made minor gains in Ukraine but at a high cost and made a record increase in airstrikes on Ukrainian cities. Meanwhile, Ukraine undertook a bold invasion of Russia's Kursk Oblast and started developing weapons that can hit targets hundreds of kilometers deep inside Russia. Finally, this was the year that North Korean ground troops entered the conflict on the side of Russia. In sum, it has been an eventful year in the conflict.

After Ukraine's lackluster performance during its 2023 counteroffensive, few of its supporters held high hopes for a major operation this year. Instead, the focus of Ukraine's Western allies shifted to rearming, refitting and training the Ukrainian armed forces in preparation for further counteroffensive operations in 2025. This effort was complicated by political delays in the US Congress, which postponed crucial aid for months. By early 2024, the consequences of this delay were severe. When US aid finally passed in March, Ukraine was running low on air defense missiles, artillery shells and even basic ammunition for front-line soldiers.

During a summer marked by small but tactically significant Russian gains, especially in the Donetsk region, Ukraine took advantage of newly arrived American assistance and launched an audacious invasion of Russia's Kursk Oblast. This operation was arguably the most surprising and consequential event of the war in 2024. It demonstrated that Ukraine could succeed on the battlefield when supplied with the necessary resources.

The capture of Russian territory by Ukraine all but guarantees that the front lines cannot be "frozen" where they currently are in any future peace talks. Furthermore, Ukraine's incursion into Russian territory forced Moscow to divert resources and troops to defend Kursk, reducing the pressure on other parts of the front.

In 2024, the war in Ukraine also became directly linked to East Asian security. Open-source intelligence had already confirmed that North Korea had supplied Russia with more than a million artillery shells and ballistic missiles. However, in the fall, Pyongyang escalated its involvement by sending about 10,000 troops to support Russia. This development, in turn, sparked renewed cooperation between Ukraine and South Korea, North Korea's long-time adversary.

Meanwhile, Russia has intensified airstrikes on Ukrainian cities at a level

not seen since the war began in 2022. Each month, thousands of drones and missiles are launched at Ukrainian targets, many hitting civilian infrastructure. These attacks have severely tested Ukraine's air defense capabilities, but Kyiv has so far mitigated the worst effects, thanks to ongoing Western support.

Diplomatically, Ukraine faced disappointment at the NATO summit in Washington in July, which marked the alliance's 75th anniversary. Many hoped for a clear path to NATO membership, understanding that immediate accession was unrealistic while Kyiv remained at war with Russia. However, Ukraine received only vague promises of eventual membership without a concrete roadmap. This was a missed opportunity for NATO and Ukraine, turning what could have been a historic milestone into a mere celebration of its past.

The outcome of the US presidential election in November could also drastically shape the war's trajectory. Although the conflict did not dominate the campaign, it surfaced occasionally, with Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris offering differing perspectives.

Trump repeatedly claimed he could end the war quickly and asserted that the invasion would not have occurred under his leadership. Harris, on the other hand, echoed the current administration's commitment to supporting Ukraine without offering specifics on how her approach might differ from President Joe Biden's, particularly regarding increased aid or lifting restrictions on US weapons.

With Trump returning to the White House in January, speculation is rife about his plans for Ukraine and NATO. There is widespread debate over what Trump will or will not do regarding the conflict. While he appears sincere in wanting to end the war, his exact strategy remains unclear.

To anticipate Trump's approach, one can look at his handling of key foreign policy issues during his first term, notably his withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action nuclear deal with Iran.

While Ukrainians are very grateful for the aid that Biden has provided since February of 2022, there is growing frustration among many about the slow pace of the assistance in recent months and the tight restrictions placed on the use of American weapons by the White House. Since Harris never expressed that she would do things differently from Biden, Trump's election victory is viewed by many in Ukraine as a potential positive.

Additionally, Trump's recent interactions with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky have been described as constructive. The two had a good meeting in person back in September. Within 24 hours of Trump's reelection, the two leaders spoke again on the phone, signaling continued dialogue. Furthermore, key appointments in Trump's new administration bode well for Ukraine. National Security Adviser Mike Waltz and Secretary of State nominee Marco Rubio have both expressed support for Ukraine in the past.

While Trump may pursue a resolution to the conflict, expecting a swift or straightforward outcome would be unrealistic. The world should not be surprised or disappointed when the war does not find a satisfactory conclusion in 2025.

Next year's NATO summit in the Netherlands will be another critical juncture. Trump's well-known criticism of the defense spending of America's NATO allies could resurface, but the alliance he returns to in 2025 is significantly different from the one he encountered in 2017. At that time, only a handful of member nations met the 2 percent of gross domestic product defense spending target. Now, 23 out of 32 members meet or exceed this benchmark, with more expected to follow.

Additionally, European countries have collectively increased their financial support for Ukraine, often surpassing the amount of aid provided by the US. While Trump may continue to press Europe to do more, he can take credit for pushing NATO toward greater military investment during his first term.

As 2024 comes to a close, the war in Ukraine remains at a pivotal crossroads. Despite numerous setbacks, Ukraine's resilience and ongoing Western support have prevented Russia from achieving its broader objectives. However, the future remains uncertain. The coming year will test the diplomatic, military and political resolve of all parties involved, with global security hanging in the balance.

Trump should use his second term to build out his foreign policy legacy. At the top of the agenda could be a fair and just conclusion to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and an increase in military spending on the enhancement of the NATO alliance in Europe. Achieving this would go a long way to making America strong again.

While Ukrainians are very grateful for the aid that Biden has provided since February of 2022, there is growing frustration among many about the slow pace of the assistance in recent months and the tight restrictions placed on the use of American weapons by the White House. Since Harris never expressed that she would do things differently from Biden, Trump's election victory is viewed by many in Ukraine as a potential positive.

Additionally, Trump's recent interactions with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky have been described as constructive. The two had a good meeting in person back in September. Within 24 hours of Trump's reelection, the two leaders spoke again on the phone, signaling continued dialogue. Furthermore, key appointments in Trump's new administration bode well for Ukraine. National Security Adviser Mike Waltz and Secretary of State nominee Marco Rubio have both expressed support for Ukraine in the past.

While Trump may pursue a resolution to the conflict, expecting a swift or straightforward outcome would be unrealistic. The world should not be surprised or disappointed when the war does not find a satisfactory conclusion in 2025.

Next year's NATO summit in the Netherlands will be another critical juncture. Trump's well-known criticism of the defense spending of America's NATO allies could resurface, but the alliance he returns to in 2025 is significantly different from the one he encountered in 2017. At that time, only a handful of member nations met the 2 percent of gross domestic product defense spending target. Now, 23 out of 32 members meet or exceed this benchmark, with more expected to follow.

Additionally, European countries have collectively increased their financial support for Ukraine, often surpassing the amount of aid provided by the US. While Trump may continue to press Europe to do more, he can take credit for pushing NATO toward greater military investment during his first term.

As 2024 comes to a close, the war in Ukraine remains at a pivotal crossroads. Despite numerous setbacks, Ukraine's resilience and ongoing Western support have prevented Russia from achieving its broader objectives. However, the future remains uncertain. The coming year will test the diplomatic, military and political resolve of all parties involved, with global security hanging in the balance.

Trump should use his second term to build out his foreign policy legacy. At the top of the agenda could be a fair and just conclusion to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and an increase in military spending on the enhancement of the NATO alliance in Europe. Achieving this would go a long way to making America strong again.

While Ukrainians are very grateful for the aid that Biden has provided since February of 2022, there is growing frustration among many about the slow pace of the assistance in recent months and the tight restrictions placed on the use of American weapons by the White House. Since Harris never expressed that she would do things differently from Biden, Trump's election victory is viewed by many in Ukraine as a potential positive.

Additionally, Trump's recent interactions with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky have been described as constructive. The two had a good meeting in person back in September. Within 24 hours of Trump's reelection, the two leaders spoke again on the phone, signaling continued dialogue. Furthermore, key appointments in Trump's new administration bode well for Ukraine. National Security Adviser Mike Waltz and Secretary of State nominee Marco Rubio have both expressed support for Ukraine in the past.

While Trump may pursue a resolution to the conflict, expecting a swift or straightforward outcome would be unrealistic. The world should not be surprised or disappointed when the war does not find a satisfactory conclusion in 2025.

Next year's NATO summit in the Netherlands will be another critical juncture. Trump's well-known criticism of the defense spending of America's NATO allies could resurface, but the alliance he returns to in 2025 is significantly different from the one he encountered in 2017. At that time, only a handful of member nations met the 2 percent of gross domestic product defense spending target. Now, 23 out of 32 members meet or exceed this benchmark, with more expected to follow.

Additionally, European countries have collectively increased their financial support for Ukraine, often surpassing the amount of aid provided by the US. While Trump may continue to press Europe to do more, he can take credit for pushing NATO toward greater military investment during his first term.

As 2024 comes to a close, the war in Ukraine remains at a pivotal crossroads. Despite numerous setbacks, Ukraine's resilience and ongoing Western support have prevented Russia from achieving its broader objectives. However, the future remains uncertain. The coming year will test the diplomatic, military and political resolve of all parties involved, with global security hanging in the balance.

Trump should use his second term to build out his foreign policy legacy. At the top of the agenda could be a fair and just conclusion to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and an increase in military spending on the enhancement of the NATO alliance in Europe. Achieving this would go a long way to making America strong again.

While Ukrainians are very grateful for the aid that Biden has provided since February of 2022, there is growing frustration among many about the slow pace of the assistance in recent months and the tight restrictions placed on the use of American weapons by the White House. Since Harris never expressed that she would do things differently from Biden, Trump's election victory is viewed by many in Ukraine as a potential positive.

Additionally, Trump's recent interactions with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky have been described as constructive. The two had a good meeting in person back in September. Within 24 hours of Trump's reelection, the two leaders spoke again on the phone, signaling continued dialogue. Furthermore, key appointments in Trump's new administration bode well for Ukraine. National Security Adviser Mike Waltz and Secretary of State nominee Marco Rubio have both expressed support for Ukraine in the past.

While Trump may pursue a resolution to the conflict, expecting a swift or straightforward outcome would be unrealistic. The world should not be surprised or disappointed when the war does not find a satisfactory conclusion in 2025.

Next year's NATO summit in the Netherlands will be another critical juncture. Trump's well-known criticism of the defense spending of America's NATO allies could resurface, but the alliance he returns to in 2025 is significantly different from the one he encountered in 2017. At that time, only a handful of member nations met the 2 percent of gross domestic product defense spending target. Now, 23 out of 32 members meet or exceed this benchmark, with more expected to follow.

Additionally, European countries have collectively increased their financial support for Ukraine, often surpassing the amount of aid provided by the US. While Trump may continue to press Europe to do more, he can take credit for pushing NATO toward greater military investment during his first term.

As 2024 comes to a close, the war in Ukraine remains at a pivotal crossroads. Despite numerous setbacks, Ukraine's resilience and ongoing Western support have prevented Russia from achieving its broader objectives. However, the future remains uncertain. The coming year will test the diplomatic, military and political resolve of all parties involved, with global security hanging in the balance.

Trump should use his second term to build out his foreign policy legacy. At the top of the agenda could be a fair and just conclusion to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and an increase in military spending on the enhancement of the NATO alliance in Europe. Achieving this would go a long way to making America strong again.

## Saudi Arabia charts an innovative path to water sustainability

Majed Nezar Al-Qatari

**W**ater is often called the soul of life, as essential to humans as air. However, its availability is decreasing as global populations grow and climate challenges intensify.

Water sustainability refers to the efficient use of water to meet current and future needs, ensuring the welfare and development of societies worldwide.

In Saudi Arabia, water sustainability is not merely an aspiration, but a necessity for survival and growth, in a country marked by an arid climate and limited renewable water resources.

Saudi Arabia is among the world's most water-scarce nations, a reality shaped by its desert-like environment, with no perennial rivers or lakes. The Kingdom relies

on water demand-supply balance, enhancing governance in the water sector and ensuring resource sustainability. Social marketing campaigns are also driving positive behavioral shifts toward water conservation.

Saudi Arabia is heavily investing in sustainable water management through its ambitious megaprojects. The \$500 billion futuristic city of NEOM will feature renewable energy-powered desalination and advanced water reuse technologies.

The Red Sea Project, a luxury tourism initiative, aims for zero wastewater discharge and high water recycling rates. Similarly, the Saudi Green Initiative promotes afforestation and sustainable irrigation to reduce water wastage.

These efforts underscore

**Wastewater treatment and reuse are also key priorities, conserving water resources and reducing pollution. The Kingdom treats and reuses 21 percent of its wastewater, with plans to increase this to 70 percent by 2030. In agriculture, which consumes 80 percent of the nation's water, advanced methods like drip irrigation and hydroponics enhance water efficiency. These initiatives demonstrate Saudi Arabia's commitment to resource optimization. Vision 2030 serves as the cornerstone of the Kingdom's water strategy. This comprehensive development plan focuses on diversifying the economy and ensuring sustainable resource use. It includes goals such as reducing water subsidies, increasing wastewater reuse and raising public awareness about conservation. Key initiatives like the National Water Strategy 2030 focus on achieving water demand-supply balance, enhancing governance in the water sector and ensuring resource sustainability. Social marketing campaigns are also driving positive behavioral shifts toward water conservation. Saudi Arabia is heavily investing in sustainable water management through its ambitious megaprojects. The \$500 billion futuristic city of NEOM will feature renewable energy-powered desalination and advanced water reuse technologies.**

heavily on non-renewable groundwater, which is depleting rapidly, and desalination plants, which supply 50 percent of its water.

Notably, per capita water use in Saudi Arabia is 234 liters per day — almost double the global average. While desalination ensures access to fresh water, it comes at a high cost. The process is energy-intensive, environmentally taxing and generates brine that harms aquatic ecosystems.

Saudi Arabia is tackling its water challenges by embracing advanced technologies. The Kingdom leads in energy-efficient desalination, incorporating renewable energy sources. Notable projects like the solar-powered Al-Khafji Plant, launched by the Saudi Water Partnership Co., showcase this innovation.

Wastewater treatment and reuse are also key priorities, conserving water resources and reducing pollution. The Kingdom treats and reuses 21 percent of its wastewater, with plans to increase this to 70 percent by 2030.

In agriculture, which consumes 80 percent of the nation's water, advanced methods like drip irrigation and hydroponics enhance water efficiency. These initiatives demonstrate Saudi Arabia's commitment to resource optimization.

Vision 2030 serves as the cornerstone of the Kingdom's water strategy. This comprehensive development plan focuses on diversifying the economy and ensuring sustainable resource use. It includes goals such as reducing water subsidies, increasing wastewater reuse and raising public awareness about conservation.

Key initiatives like the National Water Strategy 2030 focus on achieving

the Kingdom's commitment to environmental sustainability.

Recognizing that water security is a global concern, Saudi Arabia collaborates internationally with organizations like the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN to share knowledge and technology. Regionally, the Kingdom works with the Gulf Cooperation Council to address shared challenges such as declining water tables and seawater intrusion.

Despite significant advancements, achieving water sustainability in Saudi Arabia remains challenging. Factors such as demographic shifts, infrastructure growth and climate change continue to drive up water demand. To secure a sustainable future, the Kingdom must further invest in research, development and public education on conservation measures.

Citizen engagement is essential. Small reductions in household water use, when widely adopted, can make a significant impact. By combining conservation efforts with advanced technologies, Saudi Arabia can ensure its water resources support economic growth and environmental preservation for years to come.

Saudi Arabia is charting a path for water innovation through technology, policy reforms and cooperation. The Kingdom's efforts demonstrate its resolve to address critical needs and challenges. However, sustained commitment and global collaboration are essential to maintain progress.

As the world faces growing water scarcity, Saudi Arabia's story can teach valuable lessons in innovation, perseverance and resilience. Achieving a sustainable water future requires collective effort — every drop counts.



# Are Syria’s new authorities against the Iranian axis?

Abdulrahman Al-Rashed

Everyone is searching for clues about the possible foreign policy of the new Damascus regime, especially concerning Iran. If it turns out to be against Tehran, this would be a significant development and could potentially change the face of the region.

The initial impressions suggest possibilities that could be misleading, and the coming days will reveal the answers.

Theoretically, the new Syrian regime, under the leadership of Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham and its leader Ahmad Al-Sharaa, is expected to adopt a policy different from that of the ousted Assad regime. Accordingly, many bet on its opposition to Tehran and its militias, which fought against it in Syria, including hostility toward the parties of the axis, such as the militias in Iraq and the Lebanese Hezbollah.

If Al-Sharaa follows this path, we may witness the end of Iran’s expansionist project, especially after Israel successfully destroyed most of its external capabilities.

However, regional political dynamics could steer Damascus in different directions. In the early 2000s, for instance, Hamas was thought to be Iran’s adversary, until it later became clear that it was one of Tehran’s proxies, as was the Sunni Al-Jamaa Al-Islamiyah in Lebanon’s Tripoli.

Similarly, the global Muslim Brotherhood played the role of a Trojan horse for Tehran under the

banners of sectarian solidarity and hostility toward Israel.

If Israel continues to exploit the collapse in Syria to strengthen its presence there, we might be surprised by a new Damascus alliance with Tehran and Baghdad and a return of the

**The Mesopotamian region has its own dynamics, with political and sectarian competition between Damascus and Baghdad. Following the fall of the Saddam Hussein and Bashar Assad regimes, and with religious factions now ruling both capitals, Iraq’s government is theoretically Shiite while Syria’s is Sunni. After HTS took control in Damascus, anger spread in Baghdad and historical vendettas between extremist factions of the two sects began circulating on social media. Politically and militarily, Tehran, Baghdad and Hezbollah pose a serious threat to the Assad regime’s replacement. Iraq has hosted thousands of fleeing leaders and soldiers of the regime following the fall of the Syrian capital. It is expected that the axis will reorganize its priorities after the massive setbacks it has suffered this year, including the destruction of Hamas, the elimination of Hezbollah leaders and forces, and now the end of the Assad regime.**

Iranians to Sayyidah Zaynab. Much depends on Al-Sharaa’s vision and his government’s stance on the conflict with Israel.

In geopolitics, Turkiye is an important regional player. The question now is whether it holds significant influence over the new Damascus regime, particularly regarding its conflict

with Iran.

Currently, Turkiye’s role might be beneficial in terms of preventing Damascus from slipping into religious and political extremism and helping it escape US sanctions.

Regarding Damascus’ management of its foreign affairs, there are

Endowment for International Peace supports the latter view, stating: “It is wrong to assume Turkiye controls Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham.”

If the relationship deepens, Damascus’ policy would likely mirror Turkiye’s, making it unlike-

ly to adopt a hostile stance toward Iran. However, tensions with Iraq are expected to persist for various reasons.

The Mesopotamian region has its own dynamics, with political and sectarian competition between Damascus and Baghdad. Following the fall of the Saddam Hussein and

Bashar Assad regimes, and with religious factions now ruling both capitals, Iraq’s government is theoretically Shiite while Syria’s is Sunni. After HTS took control in Damascus, anger spread in Baghdad and historical vendettas between extremist factions of the two sects began circulating on social media.

Politically and militarily, Tehran, Baghdad and Hezbollah pose a serious threat to the Assad regime’s replacement. Iraq has hosted thousands of fleeing leaders and soldiers of the regime following the fall of the Syrian capital.

It is expected that the axis will reorganize its priorities after the massive setbacks it has suffered this year, including the destruction of Hamas, the elimination of Hezbollah leaders and forces, and now the end of the Assad regime.

In my view, Tehran will pursue two paths: political rapprochement with Al-Sharaa and his team under the banner of hostility toward Israel and a weaving of alliances within Syria and its surroundings to pressure Damascus.

Tehran, haunted for 40 years by the theory that Washington is planning to overthrow its leadership, is experiencing its greatest anxiety in history. It believes and repeats that what has happened in Damascus was orchestrated by Israeli and American arrangements, with Iran as the target. Today, it may be justified in feeling genuinely threatened in terms of its existence.

# Time for Europe to redefine its ties with Africa

Hafed Al-Ghwel

geopolitical stance but also misses the strategic opportunity to build meaningful, forward-looking partnerships with African nations.

As Europe’s patchwork of policies oscillates between development aid and security priorities, there remains a glaring lack of the genuine partnership frameworks which are needed in order to tackle global challenges.

Historical hangovers from Europe’s approach to Africa continue to undermine meaningful policies, since most tend to be mired in a paternalistic mindset that creates significant barriers to forming the kind of coequal partnerships that Africa desperately seeks.

In addition, the European view of Africa as a mere recipient of aid rather than a key strategic partner reflects a deep-seated reluctance to adopt more

**Brussels often touts ambitious frameworks such as the European Green Deal but these are frequently overshadowed by more immediate concerns such as migration and security threats, which are managed through a narrow lens. Such an approach neglects Africa’s potential as a partner in efforts to address shared global challenges such as an overdue global energy transition and the intensification of climate-driven disasters, challenges that require collaborative, long-term commitments rather than short-sighted “Band-Aid” solutions. The varying strategies among EU member states reflect fragmented efforts more rooted in colonial legacies and immediate national interests than a coherent, unified policy.**

radical approaches. This is evident in the political manifestos of European political parties, which continue to focus on security, migration control, and resource extraction, rather than championing economic growth and sustainable development.

The European People’s Party, for instance, emphasizes security-led narratives and border management, yet offers little on establishing strategic partnerships. Furthermore, the European Parliament’s apparent disinterest during electoral debates in Africa-EU relations reflects woeful neglect, partly spurred by immediate crises and dismally low policy bandwidth for a radical transformation of EU-Africa engagement.

This crisis-driven approach cripples long-term strategic planning and neglects the deeper interactions with African nations that are required to drive a shared agenda forward. An example of this is the cancellation of key meetings between leaders of the African Union and the EU, reflecting the strained relations over divergent policy stances. These systemic issues represent a failure to evolve beyond colonial-era dynamics and mindsets, which impedes the EU’s potential to gain influence through real, collaborative partnerships.

For the EU to truly recalibrate its relationship with Africa, superficial policy updates are woefully insufficient; a comprehensive strategic reevaluation is paramount. This begins with acknowledging the emergence of Africa as a vital geopolitical force, not a mere beneficiary of European tutelage.

The EU must utilize its soft power more effectively through equitable trade, robust cultural exchanges, expansive educational programs, and advanced technological cooperation.

Such measures must aim to empower African nations, encouraging growth from within, rather than sustaining a cycle of dependency through exploitative trade practices and one-sided agreements.

Concrete steps toward fostering self-sufficiency involve more than just economic incentives; they require sustainable investments in infrastructure, education, and technology that enable African countries to develop independently.

This includes the recognition of African priorities in international dialogues and decision-making processes, to ensure policies are shaped by those they impact the most. For instance, integration of insights from African leaders into European policy frameworks could lead to more effective and relevant initiatives.

The EU must abandon

its paternalistic stance and engage with Africa as an equal partner, placing value on African perspectives and expertise to help forge policies that are genuinely collaborative.

By broadening its focus beyond security and migration, the EU can capitalize on emerging opportunities in sectors such as renewable energy, digital innovation, and education. Such initiatives would not only improve Africa’s infrastructure and economic prospects but also strategically benefit Europe.

Investing in digital innovation in Africa could facilitate the growth of technological hubs akin to Silicon Savannah in Nairobi, which serve as nurturing economic environments for the incubation of local startups and help attract global ventures.

Furthermore, educational partnerships could address skills deficits and the development of the skilled workforces essential for sustainable development and the demands of an interconnected world.

The continent’s free-trade agreement, despite its challenges, signals a strong commitment to economic integration that Europe can reinforce by providing support for regional infrastructure projects. It is essential that the EU recognizes its engagement with the continent is not merely a goodwill gesture; it is a strategic imperative to help the bloc secure a foothold in the world’s fastest-growing regions.

This course correction should have taken place two decades ago. Yet even now there is a pivotal opportunity to realign. Africa is not merely a neighbor in need but a vital partner, one whose progress is intertwined with Europe’s own future. There is no better time than the present to embrace this partnership with vision, respect, and a commitment to shared prosperity.

# Somehow, Gaza’s suffering increased in 2024

Yossi Mekelberg

It is inconceivable that, as this year comes to an end and planet Earth completes another full circle around the sun, the war in Gaza is still raging with devastating impact after descending into a multi-front war for Israel.

When 2023 drew to a close, few would have imagined that, on the cusp of 2025, a ceasefire in Gaza would still not have been reached, many innocent people would still be being killed every single day, Gaza would be in ruins, many of its people would be displaced several times over and suffering from starvation and a lack of medical care, while the hostages would still be languishing in Hamas’ hands. It is equally mind-boggling that, despite playing a crucial role in this disastrous state of affairs, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is still managing to hold on to the most powerful office in the country.

Israel could not have had a worse leadership to guide it through what has become its most harrowing period since 1948, nor could it be caught in worse political-social circumstances to face the challenges that have emerged from Hamas’ horrendous attack. At the end of the day, the fear that such life-and-death decisions might be handed to a prime minister who was also a defendant in a most disturbing corruption trial proved to be justified by the nightmarish circumstances and consequences that have come to pass.

There were very few who questioned Israel’s right to militarily respond to Hamas’ attack of Oct. 7, 2023, and go after its leaders and military capabilities, but that outrageous spree was no license to go after the civilian population and collectively punish them for deeds they had not

committed, nor to treat them as mere collateral damage in the war with Hamas.

Much of the way this war has been conducted was dictated by the initial failure to avert the Hamas attack. Since then, between the trauma and the will to avenge the victims of that attack, the Israeli government and its security forces have taken the view that almost everything in this war is permissible. None more so than Netanyahu, who is motivated by revenge and the prospect of redemption that would help him remain in power; and thus far he has managed to achieve what seemed impossible only a short time ago.

After all, it was he who masterminded the idea that funneling hundreds of millions of dollars to Hamas would both pacify this extremist movement and preserve the rift between it and Fatah — and, by such a divide-and-rule tactic, prevent a Palestinian state from ever materializing. He could not have been more mistaken. Netanyahu misread Hamas’ intentions, weakened Israeli society and its resilience through his assault on the democratic foundations of the country and, whatever the faults of others in Israel’s security forces, it was on his watch that the defense of the communities along the border with Gaza collapsed within hours, leading to the biggest loss of Jewish lives in one day since 1945. This, on its own, should have led any leader with even just a minimal sense of integrity or decency to accept full responsibility and leave politics for good.

But this is not in Netanyahu’s DNA and his many and various denials of responsibility have

become even more emphatic since he was investigated and subsequently indicted on three counts of corruption. His trial has been deliberated by the court for more than four and a half years, yet only this month did Netanyahu begin giving his evidence, which, by all accounts, has brought the entire country into disrepute.

Throughout 2024, it became increasingly evident that the aims set by Netanyahu at the beginning of the war — of eliminating Hamas and ensuring the return of the hostages — were not and could not be compatible. Moreover, to see Hamas only through a military prism and to ignore it as a political and ideological movement has been another conceptual failure. Additionally, his claim that only military pressure would bring the hostages home proved to be another of Netanyahu’s empty promises, aimed mainly at appeasing his base and his right-wing coalition partners.

The vast majority of the hostages released so far owe their freedom to a negotiated deal, while those killed outnumber by far those released through military operations. Meanwhile, about 100 still languish in captivity. From all the evidence available to us, including, and perhaps especially, the repulsive incitements by Netanyahu’s toxic machinery against the hostages’ families, it is clear that the government has given up on those in captivity in Gaza and would prefer to see them die rather than release more Palestinian prisoners or agree to a ceasefire.

What motivates Netanyahu is his desperate quest to stay in power and, consequently, he almost

totally relies on the support of the far-right parties of Otzma Yehudit and Religious Zionism. If, in his earlier years in politics, his populism, divisiveness and fear-mongering propelled him to power, today the more he becomes entangled in his legal affairs, the more he and those around him are becoming increasingly venomous in their attacks on the judiciary, the various gatekeepers of democracy and anyone else who opposes them, while their behavior knows no boundaries.

Netanyahu knows that, in the Israeli and Jewish ethos, releasing hostages should be the highest priority, as most of the nation demands.

Nevertheless, because of his dependence on a small group of right-wing religious-messianic zealots, whose dream is to annex the West Bank and now even the Gaza Strip, while making life a living hell for Palestinians in the Occupied Territories in an attempt to force them to either submit to the settlers’ wishes will or leave, the prime minister will not allow a ceasefire deal to be concluded. To this end, he was even prepared to sacrifice his defense minister, Yoav Gallant, in the middle of a war.

Gallant was almost the only Cabinet member with substantial military experience and, despite his extremely hawkish views, he had the common sense and honesty to question the aims of the war, to call for a ceasefire deal that would also see the return of the hostages and to establish a state inquest into the disastrous failures of Oct. 7. In addition, he demanded that ultra-Orthodox youth be drafted into the army to ease the burden on those

# This winter, there are no blessings and no goodness in Gaza

Winter used to be a beloved season in Gaza. It was thought to bring “khayr” and “baraka” — goodness and blessings. Children and adults alike looked forward to the arrival of the cold season for relief from the summer heat.

When the rain would finally come, children would rush into the streets, joyfully singing “Shatti ya doniya shatti, ya arawi kul al-aradi, li-yazraa al-falah khokh wa roman wa tufah” — “Rain, world, rain and water all the lands, so the peasant can grow peaches, pomegranates and apples.”

For water-stressed Gaza, the rains were indeed a

blessing. Farmers would welcome them and start preparing for the new crop season. The markets would be full of locally grown vegetables like spinach, lettuce, carrots, cucumbers, and fruit like oranges, kiwis, persimmons and strawberries.

For city dwellers, the rainy days would be a time to relax at home, snuggling under warm blankets or gathering around a fire to make tea or sip “sahleb” — a sweet drink made of milk, starch, coconut shreds and nuts.

On the occasional night when electricity would be restored, families would cosy up in front of the TV

to watch a movie or a soap opera.

On cold and dry days, many would venture out to the seashore, enjoying a stroll or meeting friends. The aroma of sweet grilled corn and chestnuts would fill the air. Many would also stop by the famous dessert shop “Abu Al Saoud” to have a warm kunafeh — either the nut-stuffed Arabian variety or the cheese-filled one called nabulsia.

These Gaza winters now seem from the distant past. Abu Al Saoud’s shop is no more. There are no cosy gatherings and sweet chatter, no sahleb, no TV. There are no children outside singing “Shatti ya doniya

shatti” when it rains.

This year, winter did not bring khayr and baraka. It brought more suffering and utter despair.

The rains have been a curse. People are praying for dry weather, fearing what floodwaters could do to the camps for the displaced.

The sound of thunder has now become like the sound of bombs — it terrifies. Many Palestinians have nowhere to shelter from a storm. Aid groups say that at least one million people have no basic protection from winter weather.

Makeshift shelters are

Eman Alhaj Ali

made from textiles, tarpaulins, blankets, cardboard and even old rice sacks. They can hardly withstand the wind and rain. At night, the families are forced to stay awake, desperately holding their tents in place so they don’t fly away, while water seeps in from underneath, soaking their mattresses, blankets and other belongings.

Often, the shelters are so flimsy that the rain destroys them, throwing into despair families that had already lost everything. The price of tents and materials to build makeshift ones has skyrocketed, leaving those

whose shelters are blown or washed away exposed to the elements.

Some have become so desperate that they return to their bombed-out homes to take refuge. Even if the building is so badly damaged that it can collapse at any moment, people remain in it, having no other choice.

Staying warm is also nearly impossible. Wood has become unaffordable for many; 1kg now costs \$9. Those who cannot afford to buy it have to set out to search for it themselves — an exhausting, grueling task. Even if there is enough wood for a fire, that is not enough to keep a

family warm throughout the freezing night.

What makes the winter cold even more unbearable is the hunger. Since October, food prices in Gaza have skyrocketed. A bag of flour costs as much as \$200. Meat and fish have completely disappeared from the markets; vegetables and fruit are scarce and at exorbitant prices.

Bakeries have closed because they have no supplies to bake. UNRWA and the World Food Programme, which normally provide for the most vulnerable, cannot cope with demand. Soup kitchens distribute meals of chickpeas, lentils and rice, but each family

gets just one plate, barely enough for one person.

At night, in every displacement camp, the cries of hungry children can be heard as they beg their parents to give them food.

Memories of the warmth and joy that once filled homes during the winter in Gaza have faded. Despair and misery reign supreme in the cold. The suffering of the Palestinian people seems to have no end. So many survive on the flickering hope that the war and the genocide will end, that food will become available again and people will have proper shelter. That khayr and baraka will return to Gaza one day.





# Effective tobacco control measure need of hour

## F.P. Report

PESHAWAR. Tobacco consumption continues to pose significant health challenges globally, and Pakistan is no exception.

According to a report by the World Health Organization (WHO), tobacco usage causes more than eight million deaths annually worldwide, of which over 1.2 million are due to secondhand smoke.

In Pakistan, nearly 160,000 individuals lose their lives to tobacco-related illnesses every year, a concerning statistic that underscores the urgent need for stricter controls and public awareness.

Despite being a signatory to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) since 2004, Pakistan faces numerous hurdles in implementing effective anti-tobacco laws.

The sale and marketing of tobacco products, particularly to minors, remain widespread. The law prohibits the sale of tobacco to

individuals under 18 and bans smoking in public places. However, enforcement of these laws has been lackluster, allowing the tobacco industry to thrive unchecked.

The easy availability of tobacco products further exacerbates the issue. A survey conducted by a public health organization revealed that nearly 50% of retailers in Pakistan sell tobacco products near educational institutions, despite legal restrictions.

Additionally, promotional tactics such as discounts and free samples make these products more accessible, particularly to younger demographics.

Pakistan's healthcare system bears the brunt of tobacco-related illnesses, including cancer, heart disease, and respiratory conditions.

The economic burden is equally severe. According to the Pakistan Tobacco Control Cell, the country spends approximately Rs. 143 billion annually on healthcare costs related to

smoking, a figure that far outweighs the revenue generated by the tobacco industry.

Legislative measures, while present, need further strengthening. The government has increased taxes on tobacco products over the years, but the prices remain comparatively low, making cigarettes affordable for the masses.

Experts suggest that raising taxes to at least 70% of the retail price could significantly reduce consumption.

Another critical area is public awareness. Campaigns highlighting the health risks associated with tobacco use are insufficient and sporadic.

Greater investment is needed in targeted media campaigns and educational programs, especially those aimed at youth. Furthermore, empowering local governments to enforce existing laws could yield better results.

The need for robust policies and their strict implementation cannot be overstated.

Pakistan's authorities must prioritize public health over industry profits. Measures such as banning the sale of single cigarettes, imposing stricter penalties on violations, and expanding smoke-free zones could help curb tobacco use.

International examples provide a roadmap for success. Countries like Australia and the UK have implemented plain packaging laws and graphic health warnings, significantly reducing smoking rates. Pakistan could adopt similar strategies to achieve its health goals.

In conclusion, while Pakistan has made progress in tobacco control, much work remains to be done. Strengthening enforcement mechanisms, increasing public awareness, and imposing higher taxes on tobacco products are crucial steps toward a healthier, smoke-free future. Only through collective efforts can we mitigate the devastating impact of tobacco on public health and the economy.



ISLAMABAD: People buy fish as demand rises despite high white meat prices during winter at H-9 Weekly Bazaar.

## 173 illegal connections disconnected

### F.P. Report

LAHORE: SNGPL continues its rigorous crackdown on gas theft, taking decisive action in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Islamabad. During the latest raids, 173 illegal gas connections were disconnected, and fines amounting to Rs 2 million were imposed.

In Lahore, the SNGPL team disconnected 20 connections for illegal gas usage and an additional 4 for using gas compressors. Fines totaling Rs 0.66 million were imposed. In Faisalabad, 4 illegal connections were disconnected, and fines worth Rs 0.06 million were lodged.

The Sheikhpura team disconnected 5 illegal connections, imposing fines of Rs 1.1 million on offenders. In Multan, 14 connections were disconnected for illegal usage, while the Bahawalpur team disconnected another 14 connections for gas compressor usage. In Sahiwal, 1 illegal connection was severed, with fines of Rs 0.25 million imposed.

The crackdown in Karak was particularly significant, with the regional team disconnecting 111 illegal gas connections. SNGPL remains committed to combating gas theft and ensuring the equitable distribution of gas to valuable consumers.

## APBUMA welcomes PM address

FAISALABAD (APP): Imran Mehmood Sheikh, Central Chairman All Pakistan Bed sheets and Upholstery Manufacturers Association (APBUMA), has welcomed the Prime Minister's historic address to the D-8 Summit in Cairo in which he clearly spelled out the importance of youths and the SME sector as the key drivers for the economic development.

He said that after this policy statement by the Prime Minister of Pakistan at a global forum, government departments concerned and the FBR should realign their policies by investing in youths and diverting maximum resources towards the SME sector. He said that APBUMA is the largest trade body of the SME sector which was experiencing a liquidity crunch due to stuck-up refund claims. He clarified that refunds are not a favor but it is the taxes already paid by SMEs despite their limited financial resources. Hence, the government must clear these refunds on top priority.

He stressed the need to clear refunds of DTLT/DDT so that economic activities could be generated in addition to creating job opportunities for the unemployed youth. He lamented a budgetary allocation of Rs.10 billion as against the accumulated DTLT/DDT refunds of Rs.35 billion.

He said that this allocation is insufficient to put the SME sector back on the growth trajectory.

He said that the government should realize that as it was facing financial constraints, the position of the SME sector is more vulnerable.

"The SME sector needs immediate refunds so that it could get maximum export orders and give a quantum jump to exports," he said.

## Small industry needs govt special focus

— to generate employment: APBF

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The All Pakistan Business Forum (APBF) has said that the value-added small industry should be given the top priority of the government to generate employment, providing them maximum facilitation to meet their requirements.

APBF President Syed Maaz Mahmood said that the government needs to establish long-term and sustainable policies in consultation with the real stakeholders to enhance growth. He said that presently, the high cost of doing business has proved to be dangerous for the small industry, as the ever-increasing energy, gas and power tariffs are the real threat to the economy amidst high markup rate and continuous fluctuations exchange rate.

APBF Chairman Ibrahim Qureshi asked the government to take prompt measures to bring down the production costs for the small industry to enable them to compete in the international market.

He said that exporting SMEs are currently having difficulty to compete the global market because of rapid increase in production costs. He said that the high cost of production is not good for our exports.

Ibrahim Qureshi said that high energy tariffs, growing rates of taxes, and lack of skilled labor are the main reasons behind the increase in the cost of production. Manufacturing and production industries have the potential to significantly impact economic growth by reducing unemployment in the country. The small industry has an immense potential to create jobs with comparatively low investment and less energy needs, as it generates four times the employment at one-fourth of the energy consumption compared to other textile sectors.

Syed Maaz Mahmood said that Pakistan's industry is struggling in the international market due to challenges such as high inflation, political instability, increased power tariff, rising fuel costs, energy shortages, and lack of R&D.

The APBF President said that an effective strategy is needed to improve the performance of the industrial

sector. The government should facilitate exporters by providing a level playing field to them in terms of business costs, particularly in utility pricing, he suggested. He said Pakistan's economy, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), is struggling to cope with the current economic crunch, and needs support. Rather than providing subsidies or waivers, the industries are being burdened through rising production cost. The burden of surging oil prices in the international market is immediately transferred to consumers by the government, but the process of reducing prices is always very slow, he noted.

He asked the government to work on a fast track plan to address expansive energy issue and priority should be given to the value-added small industry in this regard.

He urged for increasing ease of doing business, lowering cost of production, paying early refunds to solve liquidity crunch, relaxing import policy for industrial raw material, and equalizing the energy tariff across the country.

## Malaysian team's visit to boost agro, food trade

LAHORE (APP): A visiting nine-members high-level agro and food delegation of Malaysia to Pakistan will enhance bilateral trade in agricultural and food products between the two Muslim countries.

Convener of Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), regional Standing Committee on Food, Shahid Imran, expressed these views while talking to a delegation of food exporters led by Zia-ur-Rehman here Sunday.

The Convener mentioned that the Malaysian delegation led by Dato Syed Abu Hassan, visiting Pakistan under the directive of Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim as part of efforts to further strengthen bilateral trade. The delegation held result-oriented meetings

with Zubair Motiwala, Chief Executive Officer of Trade Development Authority Pakistan (TDAP) and Secretary Shehryar Taj, who assured them of their full support in facilitating business-to-business (B2B) engagements with leading Pakistani exporters. The Secretary briefed the delegates that Pakistan has a robust capacity to meet Malaysia's growing demand for high-quality agro and food products including snacks.

The delegation expressed interest in expanding imports to address their domestic needs.

He said the meeting underscored the importance of leveraging the Malaysia-Pakistan Closer Economic Partnership Agreement (MPCEPA) to reduce tariffs and improve market access for Pakistani products.

Shahid Imran mentioned that Zubair Motiwala reaffirmed TDAP's commitment in boosting Pakistan's agro-export potential, stating, "Malaysia remains a key trading partner in Southeast Asia. We will work closely with stakeholders, including exporters and regulatory authorities, to ensure compliance with Malaysian standards and maximize export opportunities."

Dato expressed confidence in Pakistan's agricultural potential and appreciated the efforts of TDAP and the Ministry of Commerce in fostering trade relations. Both sides agreed to strengthen cooperation through enhanced trade delegations, capacity-building initiatives, and market intelligence sharing.

## RCCI wants stakeholders' input on Tax-Bill 2024

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) has called upon the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to engage stakeholders and the business community in consultations over the proposed Tax Laws (Amendment) Bill 2024.

RCCI emphasized that the proposed amendments could further discourage the business community and widen the trust deficit between taxpayers and the FBR. RCCI President Usman Shaukat, in an official statement on Sunday expressed concerns saying "These amendments are overly stringent and will create significant hurdles for businesses to operate smoothly. They will further erode the already fragile trust between the business

community and the tax authorities."

The RCCI urges the government to reconsider these amendments and to engage in meaningful consultations with stakeholders to create a more business-friendly and trust-based tax environment.

He urged the FBR to prioritize dialogue and transparency, ensuring that stakeholders' concerns are addressed before finalizing any legislative changes. RCCI believes that inclusive consultations are essential for fostering a fair and business-friendly taxation system. The RCCI remains committed to supporting constructive reforms that promote economic growth while safeguarding the interests of the business community.

## Farhan Munir appointed FTO coordinator

LAHORE (APP): Minister of State and Federal Tax Ombudsman (FTO) Dr Asif Mahmood Jah has appointed leading businessman Muhammad Farhan Munir as his Coordinator on the construction sector for Faisalabad to maintain a liaison of the business community with the FTO secretariat.

Farhan will also create awareness among tax payers that the redress of their genuine tax related complaints are hardly one call away and resolved in a record period of only 36 days.

He has also been assigned the special task of holding meetings with all office-bearers of elected trade bodies including chambers of commerce and industry, small traders associations, textile associations, power looms associations, and cloth merchants associations etc. to know their tax grievances and help sort them out within the ambit of law.

## PIAF called for finalization and implementation of export package

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) on Sunday called for finalization and then its early implementation of some export enhancement package, urging the government to rescue this vital sector of economy and get the relief package implemented in its true spirit for sustainability of country's exports. Capacity of the industry was mostly unutilized while overhead costs had increased which compelled the export sectors to think of alternatives, it maintained.

PIAF Chairman Faheem Rehman Saigol, in a statement here along with senior vice chairman Nasrullah Mughal and vice chairman Tahir Manzoor Chaudhary, said early implementation of an export package can help steer the exporting industry out of crisis.

The government needs to establish a long-term and sustainable policies in consultation with the real stakeholders to enhance

exports, increasing foreign exchange earnings for the country. Presently, the high cost of doing business has proved to be dangerous for the export-oriented industry, as the ever-increasing energy, gas and power tariffs are the real threat to the economy amidst high markup rate and continuous fluctuations exchange rate.

They demanded the quarters concerned for initiating steps such as provision of uninterrupted energy supply to the industry to make Pakistani exports competitive in the international market, besides evolving an export-led policy and availability of energy at regionally competitive prices for economic turnaround.

The PIAF office-bearers mentioned that Pakistan's share in global market was shrinking and going to other countries and unit price of its products was decreasing thus resulting in reduced profitability for Pakistani exporters.

Tahir Manzoor Chaudhary stated that textiles in general and the value-added sector in par-

ticular were becoming uncompetitive in international market. That was why export of Pakistani textile was not showing significant growth for the last few years while its competitors – Bangladesh, India, China and Vietnam were recording upward move in their exports, he cited.

PIAF office-bearers also stressed that the supply of power and gas should not be interrupted during winter as the export orders in hand had to be honoured.

They asked the government to take prompt measures to bring down the production costs for the export industry to enable them to compete in the international market.

Faheem Saigol said that the export industry is currently having difficulty to compete the global market because of rapid increase in production costs. He said that the high cost of production is not good for our exports.

Nasrullah Mughal said that high energy tariffs, growing rates of taxes, and lack of skilled labor are the

main reasons behind the increase in the cost of production. Manufacturing and production industries have the potential to significantly impact economic growth by reducing unemployment in the country.

The PIAF chairman said that Pakistan's industry is struggling in the international market due to challenges such as high inflation, political instability, increased power tariff, rising fuel costs and energy shortages.

An effective strategy is needed to improve the performance of the industrial sector. The government should facilitate exporters by providing a level playing field to them in terms of business costs, particularly in utility pricing, he suggested.

He said Pakistan's economy, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, is struggling to cope with the current economic crunch, and needs support.

Rather than providing subsidies or waivers, the industries are being burdened through rising production cost.

## Malik for renewing pledge for peaceful, prosperous South Asia

LAHORE (APP): SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry former President Iftikhar Ali Malik here Sunday called for renewing a pledge to work hand-in-hand for a South Asia that is peaceful, prosperous and inclusive by embracing the spirit of cooperation to transform the region into a beacon of hope for the world.

In his message on the 39th SAARC Charter Day, Malik added that despite all odds, he was optimistic about a better future of the SAARC Chamber. "Our shared history, rich cultural diversity, and aspirations for a better tomorrow are the factors which can keep us united and stronger. Let us honour the legacy of the SAARC Charter by turning its vision into reality. Together, we can build a South Asia that fulfills the dreams of its people and secures a brighter future for generations," he remarked.

Iftikhar Ali Malik called for a renewed commitment to the principles and values which define SAARC, and forging joint efforts

through mutual trust and shared responsibility to combat this region's challenges of poverty, climate change, terrorism and health crises.

"We must also prioritize people-centric development, ensuring that the voices and aspirations of our citizens guide our regional agenda. Women, youth, and marginalized communities must be empowered to contribute to and benefit from the regional cooperation," he maintained.

About the role of private sector, he said, as a representative of the business community and a former President of the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry, he firmly believed that the private sector has a crucial role in advancing the SAARC objectives. Economic collaboration, innovation, and entrepreneurship are key drivers of regional integration.

He said SAARC Chamber has consistently advocated for policies facilitating trade, investment and business partnerships

among member states. By addressing non-tariff barriers, improving infrastructure connectivity, and fostering digital transformation, we can unlock the vast potential of South Asia's markets.

Iftikhar Ali Malik urged member countries governments to create an enabling environment for the private sector, encouraging cross-border ventures and partnerships, citing that together, we can build a resilient, inclusive, and sustainable economic landscape that benefits all citizens of South Asia.

About challenges to regional integration, he said, while SAARC has made notable strides, it is essential to review the challenges obstructing the progress.

Trade within the region remains significantly lower than its potential, accounting for only a small fraction of the total trade volume. This is a stark contrast to other regional blocs, such as the European Union and ASEAN, which have achieved higher levels of

integration and cooperation, he asserted.

About future vision, he suggested bold steps to engage in open and constructive dialogue to resolve conflicts and build trust. The political will of member states is critical to overcome longstanding issues and unlock the potential of regional cooperation.

Invest in regional infrastructure such as transport, energy and digital networks, to facilitate seamless movement of goods, services, and people. Connectivity is the cornerstone of economic and social integration.

He said, "We should tackle climate change through collaborative efforts in renewable energy conservation and sustainable development. South Asia has the opportunity to lead the way in green innovation and climate resilience. We should also empower SAARC institutions with adequate resources and authority to implement regional programmes effectively."

Together, these measures demonstrate the government's commitment to fostering a business-friendly environment while ensuring fiscal discipline, he added.

This dual approach not only boosts investor confidence but also strengthens public trust in governance, ultimately paving the way for sustainable economic development and shared prosperity for all, he concluded.

## Steps to broaden tax net hailed

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) Chief Executive Officer Mian Kashif Ashfaq Sunday commended the step of bringing all tax evaders and non-filers into the tax net to foster economic stability and enhance country's financial framework.

Chairing the Council's Board of Directors meeting here, he added that this move would significantly contribute in broadening tax base, ensuring a fairer

distribution of tax burden among all bonafide tax payers. By targeting tax evasion and encouraging compliance, the FBR (Federal Board of Revenue) is laying the foundation for a more transparent and equitable fiscal system.

"A widened tax base will increase revenue generation, enabling the state to invest in critical sectors for infrastructure, education, and healthcare. It will also reduce the reliance on

indirect taxes, which disproportionately affect low-income groups, thus promoting social equity," he added.

He mentioned that cut in monetary policy rate to stimulate investment is a strategic move that complements the broader economic vision. Lower interest rates make borrowing more affordable, encourage businesses to expand operations, create jobs, and drive economic growth.





## In brief

## PCB to select 50 batters

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Mohsin Naqvi has taken another important decision to improve the national T20 squad, under which a strike force will be formed. The strike force aims to add new talent/blood to the team, PCB sources told APP Sunday. It is worth mentioning here that the strike force aims to select 50 talented batters from across the country. According to sources, 50 young power hitters will be included in the strike force, who would be selected on merit from across the country. This selection will be supervised by former all-rounder Abdul Razzaq, who will head the project. The batters selected will be given special training in power hitting so that they can develop more power and effectiveness in their game.

## Raja wins gold at US Open

ISLAMABAD (Monitoring Desk): Squash star Mohammad Harnas Ali Raja has made history by winning the gold medal at the US Junior Open Squash Championship 2024, becoming the first Pakistani to clinch the Under-11 Boys' title in the tournament's history. According to details, Harnas displayed exceptional skill and composure in the final match, defeating his American opponent in straight sets with an impressive score line of 11-8, 11-8, 11-8. The US Junior Open Squash 2024 was a prestigious event featuring fierce competition, with 1,007 players from 51 countries vying for glory. Harnas's victory not only highlights his talent but also marks a significant achievement for Pakistan in the world of junior squash.

## Sindh secure silver medal

KARACHI (PPI): The Sindh Women's Football team secured the silver medal at the Quaid-e-Azam Inter-Provincial Games 2024, held in Islamabad. In a competitive final, the Sindh team faced a 2-0 defeat against the Islamabad Women's Football team but showcased exceptional performance throughout the tournament. According to a statement issued today, speaking on the team's efforts, Coach Sadia Sheikh commended the players for their remarkable display of skill and resilience. "The team has consistently improved over time, and despite the loss in the final, their performance gives us hope for future victories," she said. She also lauded the well-organized nature of the tournament, highlighting the complete support from the government, which ensured all necessary facilities were provided to players and team management. Sadia emphasized the abundant talent among Pakistani women athletes, underscoring the need for more opportunities to nurture their potential. She called for initiatives like talent hunt programs in schools and colleges to identify and support young players. She expressed optimism about the future of women's football in Pakistan, stating, "With continued government support and regular tournaments, the day is not far when Pakistan's women's football team will make a mark on international platforms." The Quaid-e-Azam Inter-Provincial Games, an annual event promoting sports across provinces, witnessed enthusiastic participation, with Sindh's commendable performance standing out as a highlight of the competition.

# Rameen, Sidra help Stars clinch National Women's One-Day title

RAWALPINDI (APP): Captains' innings by Sidra Amin (77, 84b, 11x4s, 1x6) and an all-round performance from Rameen Shamim (37 not out, two wickets) led Stars to a five-wicket win over Conquerors at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium on Sunday to lift the trophy of National Women's One-Day Tournament 2024 and also grab the prize money of 1.5 million rupees.

Fatima Sana-led Conquerors had to settle with a runners-up trophy and prize money of one million rupees.

Opting to bat first, Conquerors managed to score 178 for nine in 45 overs — the match which was also live-streamed on PCB's official YouTube channel. Conquerors' Hafsa Khalid top-scored with a 78-ball 47, hitting nine boundaries. Dua Majid was other notable contributor with the bat, scoring 40 off 66 balls, hitting three fours.

For Stars, pacer Waheeda Akhtar bagged three wickets for 33, while

spinners Rameen Shamim (9-0-38-2), Tuba Hassan (9-0-42-2) and Neelam Mushtaq (9-0-26-1) shared five wickets between them.

In turn, Stars achieved the target in 43.2 overs losing five wickets in the process. Skipper Sidra and Rameen knitted a 103-run partnership for the fifth wicket, while Tuba Hassan's (12 not out, four balls, 3x4s) three boundaries in the 43rd over made sure Stars get a comfortable win.

Sidra, for her match-winning innings was declared the player of the match, while Invincibles' Omaira Sohail was declared the best player of the tournament for scoring 253 runs and taking 13 wickets. In other individual awards, Invincibles' Muneeba Ali was declared the best wicket-keeper of the tournament with 12 dismissals behind stumps. Challengers Aliya Riaz for 382 runs in eight outings was named best batter of the tournament, while Stars' Rameen was named best bowler of the tournament after grabbing 20 wickets from nine matches.

Scores in brief: Stars beat Conquerors by five wickets at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium.

Conquerors 178-9, 45 overs (Hafsa Khalid 47, Dua Majid 40, Saira Jabeen 32, Najiha Alvi 23, Fatima Sana 20; Waheeda Akhtar 3-33, Rameen Shamim 2-38, Tuba Hassan 2-42).

Stars 179-5, 43.2 overs (Sidra Amin 77, Rameen Shamim 37 not out, Sadaf Shamas 22; Nashra Sundhu 2-26).

Player of the match — Sidra Amin (Stars).

Best Wicket-keeper of the Tournament — Muneeba Ali (Invincibles) (12 dismissals).

Best Batter of the Tournament — Aliya Riaz (Challengers) (382 runs, eight matches).

Best Bowler of the tournament — Rameen Shamim (Stars) (20 wickets, nine matches).

Player of the Tournament — Omaira Sohail (Invincibles) (253 runs, 13 wickets, eight matches).



## Champions Trophy India vs Pakistan on February 23 in UAE

DUBAI (Monitoring Desk): India will play their Champions Trophy 2025 matches in the UAE. The decision, though widely expected, was finalised after Mohsin Naqvi, the PCB chairman, met with Sheikh Nahyan Al Mubarak in Pakistan. Sheikh Nahyan is a senior UAE minister and also the head of the Emirates Cricket Board.

"The PCB has picked the UAE as a neutral venue for the Champions Trophy," PCB spokesperson Amir Mir said. The Pakistan vs India league match will be played on February 23, a Sunday. Apart from Pakistan, the other two teams in India's group are Bangladesh and New Zealand. India will face Bangladesh on February 20, and New Zealand on March 2. All these games are like-

ly to be held in Dubai.

Pakistan will kick off the tournament on February 19, against New Zealand in Karachi. Pakistan's last league match, against Bangladesh, will be played in Rawalpindi on February 27.

The second group has Afghanistan, Australia, England and South Africa. The matches for both groups — apart from the India games — will be played across Lahore, Karachi and Rawalpindi.

The two semi-finals are scheduled for March 4 (without a reserve day) and March 5 (with a reserve day). The final on March 9 also has a reserve day. The first semi-final, if India make it to that stage, will be played in the UAE. If India don't qualify, the game will be held in Pakistan. The final is slotted for Lahore,

with the provision of holding it in the UAE if India make it that far.

The hybrid model was finalised after the parties involved agreed that, in return, Pakistan's matches at ICC events hosted by India till 2027 will also be at a neutral venue. In all instances, knockout games such as the semi-final and the final will also be held at neutral venues.

The agreement begins with the Champions Trophy, and will apply to the 2025 women's ODI World Cup in India, and the 2026 men's T20 World Cup, which will be co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka. It could also apply to the 2028 women's T20 World Cup, the first tournament of the next cycle that has now been awarded to Pakistan.

## Man Utd embarrassed by Bournemouth, Chelsea held at Everton

LONDON (AFP): Manchester United crashed to a humiliating 3-0 home defeat to Bournemouth, while Chelsea missed the chance to go top of the Premier League after a 0-0 draw at Everton on Sunday.

United boss Ruben Amorim, who once again left Marcus Rashford out of his squad, is set for a miserable Christmas following the worst result of his brief reign. Languishing in 13th place, United have suffered four defeats in nine matches in all competitions since Amorim arrived from Sporting Lisbon in November to replace the sacked Erik ten Hag.

United's second successive loss after their League Cup exit at Tottenham on Thursday underlined Amorim's belief that their road back to the top will be long and arduous. United, who have conceded first in their last six games, were booed off at half-time, while the final whistle was greeted by more jeers from the few fans who stayed until the bitter end.

While it is far too early to pass judgment on Amorim, the Portuguese coach cannot afford many more results like this if he is to



keep the players and fans on his side. Amorim's decision to play without Rashford for the third consecutive game will face fresh scrutiny after United's wretched performance.

Amorim surprisingly omitted the 27-year-old England forward from the squad for United's win at Manchester City last weekend, prompting Rashford to hint he was willing to leave the club for a "new challenge". Rashford was at Old Trafford wearing a United tracksuit amid his extended exile as Amorim made six changes from the line-up beaten 4-3 by Tottenham in the League Cup quarter-finals.

Again, United were exposed at set-pieces in the

29th minute when Bournemouth's teenage defender Dean Huijsen punished poor marking at a free-kick to glance a header past Andre Onana.

There was even worse to come for Amorim in the second half as Justin Kluivert doubled fifth-placed Bournemouth's advantage with a 61st minute penalty following Noussair Mazraoui's foul on the forward. Antoine Semenyo compounded United's misery two minutes later with a cool finish from Dango Ouattara's pass.

With leaders Liverpool playing at Tottenham in Sunday's late game, second-placed Chelsea would have gone



JOHANNESBURG: Saim Ayub brought up his second hundred of the series, South Africa vs Pakistan, 3rd ODI.

## India trump Bangladesh

KUALA LAMPUR (Agencies): India triumphed over Bangladesh by 41 runs to clinch the inaugural ACC U19 Women's T20 Asia Cup at the Bayuemas Oval Bayuemas Oval on Sunday.

Opening batter Gongadi Trisha played a pivotal role in India's commanding victory, scoring a well-crafted half-century to anchor the innings. India, put to bat first, set a competitive total of 117/7 in their allotted 20 overs, with Trisha leading the charge.

After a shaky start at 25/2, right-handed opener steadied the ship, finishing with 52 runs off 47 balls, including five fours and two sixes. Her crucial 41-run partnership with skipper Niki Prasad, who contributed 12 runs, propelled the team forward. Following her dismissal, Mithila Vinod took the reins of India's batting charge and added valuable runs at the backend with a 12-ball 17.

Farjana Easmin was the standout bowler for Bangladesh, recording brilliant bowling figures of 4/31 in his four overs, while Nishita Akter Nishi struck twice. In response, Bangladesh's batting unit was unfolded on a meagre 76 in 18.3 overs and thus succumbed to a gruelling defeat in the high-stakes clash.

Middle-order batter Juairiya Ferdous remained the top-scorer for the side with a 30-ball 22, followed by opener Fahomida Choya, who made 18 off 24 deliveries. Besides them, none of the Bangladeshi batters could amass double figures, highlighting their struggles against a disciplined Indian bowling attack.

Aayushi Shukla was the pick of the Indian bowlers, taking three wickets for just 17 runs in her 3.3 overs, while Sonam Yadav and Parunika Sisodia claimed two wickets each. For her match-winning knock, Gongadi Trisha was adjudged the player of the match in the U19 Women's Asia Cup 2024 final.

## Ben Stokes out of England's Champions Trophy squad

LONDON (AFP): England Test captain Ben Stokes has been ruled out of next year's Champions Trophy one-day international tournament in Pakistan and the preceding white-ball tour of India, team management announced Sunday.

The 33-year-old star all-rounder was not considered after damaging a hamstring during England's defeat by New Zealand in the third Test at Hamilton earlier this month.

"Durham all-rounder Ben Stokes was not considered for selection as he continues to be assessed following a left hamstring injury sustained," said an England and Wales Cricket Board statement.

Stokes did not bat in the second innings of that match as England slumped to a 423-run defeat — a result that meant his side still won a three-match series 2-1.

He previously missed this year's home series against Sri Lanka and the first Test in Pakistan due to hamstring issues.

With England facing a five-match Test series at home to India starting in June before their pinnacle 2025/26 Ashes tour of Australia, team management have decided against risking inspirational red-ball skipper Stokes.

Key batsman Joe Root, who preceded Stokes as

Test captain, returns to the ODI side for the first time since the 2023 World Cup in India.

Fast bowler Mark Wood, who missed the recent Test tours of both Pakistan and New Zealand, with a bone-stress injury to his right elbow, is in both squads.

The India series and Champions Trophy will mark England's first limited-overs tour and tournament under coach Brendon McCullum, previously just in charge of the Test side.

Butler stays as captain — Jos Buttler, who missed the recent ODI series against the West Indies with a calf injury, remains captain of the two white-ball teams despite England surrendering both their 50-over and T20 world titles since November 2023.

But it is possible the dashing batsman, replaced as skipper in the Caribbean by all-rounder Liam Livingstone, may not keep wicket, as he has for much of his limited-overs career.

Both the ODI squad for the India tour and the Champions Trophy, as well as the squad for five T20s in India in January, feature two other wicketkeepers in Test gloveman Jamie Smith, who missed the New Zealand series to attend the birth of his first child, and Phil Salt.

Meanwhile, 21-year-old rising star Jacob Bethell,

who marked his debut Test series with three fifties in New Zealand, is included in both squads.

Leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed joins the T20 squad, while Root is selected only for the ODIs.

The tour party leaves for India on January 17, with the first match of a five-game series against T20 world champions India in Kolkata on January 22.

India and England will then play a three-match ODI series, in preparation for the Champions Trophy, starting in Nagpur on February 6.

Match dates for the Champions Trophy, which also features Pakistan as well as Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Afghanistan and Bangladesh, have yet to be announced, with the tournament due to run from February 19 to March 9.

England ODI squad for India tour and 2025 Champions Trophy in Pakistan:

Jos Buttler (capt/wkt), Jofra Archer, Gus Atkinson, Jacob Bethell, Harry Brook, Brydon Carse, Ben Duckett, Jamie Overton, Jamie Smith (wkt), Liam Livingstone, Adil Rashid, Joe Root, Saqib Mahmood, Phil Salt (wkt), Mark Wood.

Note: Rehan Ahmed to join squad for T20 series in India with Root not involved.

## Usyk beats Fury in heavyweight c'ship rematch



RIYADH (AFP): Oleksandr Usyk won his heavyweight championship rematch against Tyson Fury by unanimous decision on Saturday to stay unbeaten across two divisions and cement his place among the greats.

The Ukrainian, who forced the pace and repeatedly tagged Fury with his accurate left hook, was awarded the fight 116-112 by all three judges, handing Fury his second straight loss.

Usyk's win takes him to 23-0 with 14 knockouts and extends one of the all-time best careers that includes Olympic gold and undisputed champion at cruiserweight.

"He's a great fighter, it's a great performance," Usyk, 37, said of Fury, who was unbeaten over 35 fights until he lost their four-belt unification bout in May.

"Unbelievable" 24 rounds for my career."

Only the WBA, WBO and WBC belts were on the line this time after Usyk, focused on the lucrative rematch, relinquished his IBF title rather

than face challenger Daniel Dubois.

By beating Fury seven months ago, "The Cat" had already joined the likes of Muhammad Ali, Joe Louis and Mike Tyson as undisputed heavyweight, and the first of the four-belt era.

The defeat opens up an uncertain future for the 36-year-old Fury, now 34-2-1, who announced his retirement in 2022 only to change his mind and return to the ring.

Fury, wearing a Santa-style red-and-white robe and bushy beard, appeared to Mariah Carey's "All I Want For Christmas Is You", before a determined-looking Usyk strode out in Cossack gear.

The 6ft 9ins (206cm) Briton's jab held Usyk at bay early on and he landed a jarring right in round two. Usyk caught Fury flush with a left as he raised the pace in round three.

They went toe-to-toe in a punishing fifth round, with Fury pummeling body shots while Usyk launched a flurry to the head. In the sixth, he stung

Fury with a clean shot to the nose.

The supremely fit Usyk, renowned for taking charge in the closing rounds, was the aggressor in the seventh, tagging Fury with a hook as the "Gypsy King" backed away.

Fury regained the initiative in the ninth, wielding his jab and one-two combinations and leaning on the Ukrainian, utilising his career-heaviest 281lb (127.4kg) of weight.

It was see-saw stuff as they traded blows but Usyk rocked Fury in the 11th with a lightning combination that ended with yet another left hook to the face.

An Usyk uppercut to Fury's chin highlighted a furious final round and there was little doubt about the winner as the Ukrainian sank to his knees, arms aloft.

Reports put the prize purse at an increased \$190 million with Usyk, as defending champion, expected to receive the bigger share -- a reversal of fortunes from May.

The fight sits high in the portfolio of Saudi Arabia's oil-funded push into sports, which has drawn accusations of "sportswashing" its dubious human rights record.

After Formula One, the LIV Golf tour, Newcastle United and a swathe of ageing football stars, the conservative kingdom's strategy confirmed its crowning moment this month when it was awarded football's 2034 World Cup.





## In brief

### Eight held in sheesha café

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police, continuing their "Nasha Ab Nahi" campaign, arrested eight individuals on Sunday in a crackdown against illegal Sheesha cafes in Gulberg Greens. The police recovered a large quantity of hookahs and flavors from the accused. A public relations officer told APP that ICT police Koral police intensified crackdown against the Sheesha centers in Gulberg Greens in order to eliminate this menace from the city and special efforts were also taken against the accused involved in immoral activities. In this regard, the Koral police station team apprehended 08 accused and recovered hookah and flavors from their possession. The arrested accused was also shifted to the police station for further legal proceedings. DIG Ali Raza said that the Islamabad Police is actively working to ensure the safety of citizens' lives and property, emphasizing that no elements will be allowed to disrupt citizens' peace. Protecting the lives, property, and dignity of citizens is the Islamabad Police's top priority, he added.

### 66,300 cusecs water released

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 66,300 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 39,100 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarebela Dam was 1471.22 feet and was 73.22 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 16,700 cusecs and 25,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1133.15 feet, which was 84.15 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 6,100 cusecs and 25,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 50,300, 26,900, 26,600 and 1,900 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 11,000 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 1,700 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### Over 2,76,279 e-challans issued

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police on Monday issued over 2,76,279 e-challan tickets to motorists for various traffic violations through safe city cameras. This initiative is part of the ICT Police's efforts to ensure compliance with traffic laws and improve road safety in the federal capital. According to a police spokesperson, the Islamabad Police are utilizing all available resources and taking strict measures against traffic rule violators in accordance with the law. In this regard, Islamabad Police have issued 16 e-challan tickets during the last 24 hours and a total of 2,76,279 e-challan tickets to motorists have been issued over various traffic rules violations so far, he said. Moreover, e-challan tickets were delivered to the violators at their residential addresses. A copy of the challan was attached with the master file of the vehicles at the excise office over non-payment of the penalty amount within the given time. The car owners who were subjected to a fine could not sell or transfer their vehicle until the clearance of dues. The fine amount could be paid through different banks, mobile wallets and other digital means.

# Aqeel Ahmad anticipates major progress in govt-JUI-F negotiations

ISLAMABAD (APP): PM's Adviser on Law and Justice, Barrister Aqeel Malik expressed profound satisfaction on Sunday, following a highly productive meeting with Maulana Fazlur Rehman and confidently asserted that a groundbreaking, mutually beneficial agreement between the government and JUI-F is imminent, anticipated within the next couple of days.

"A major breakthrough is anticipated in the ongoing negotiations between the government and JUI-F,"

stated Aqeel Ahmad in an exclusive interview with a private news channel.

"The Ministry of Law, under the strict directives of the Prime Minister, is actively progressing the negotiations with Maulana Fazlur Rehman, adding, we are committed to honouring his requests on a priority basis," Ahmad added.

He commended Maulana Fazlur Rehman's decision to engage in dialogue, praising his adoption of a democratic approach to finding a solution.

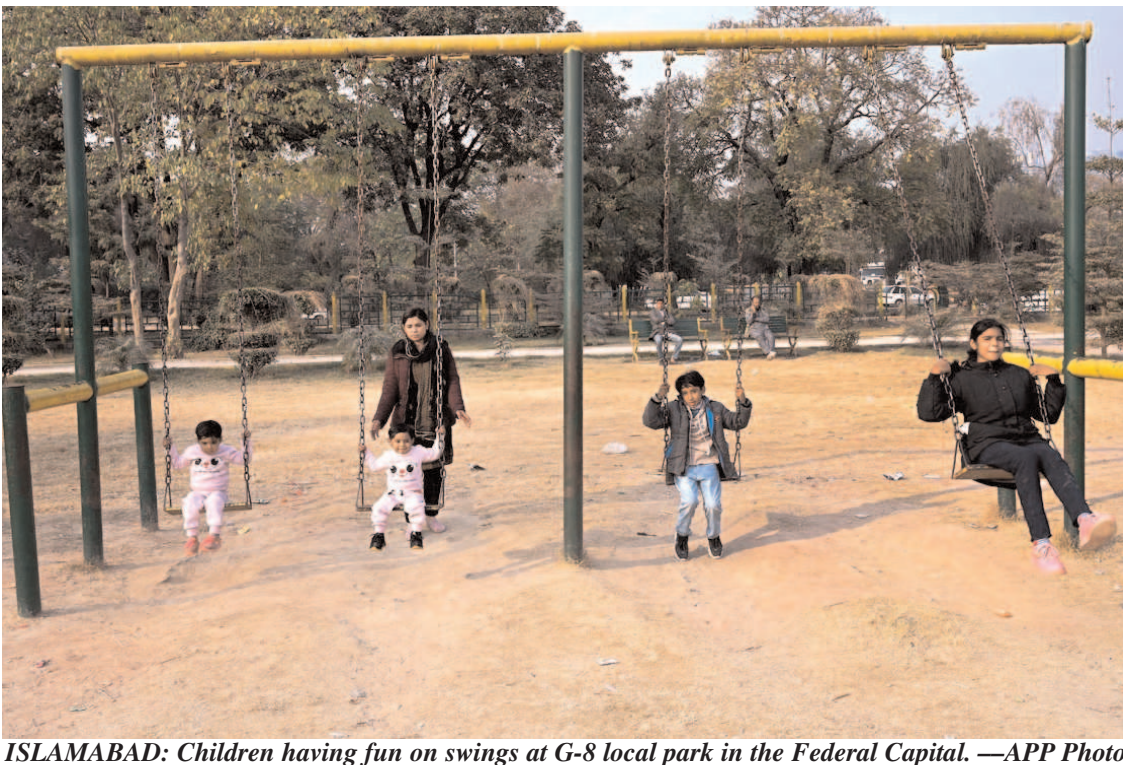
By choosing this path, Maulana has demonstrated a commitment to peaceful and constructive negotiation, which is truly commendable, he added. Aqeel Ahmad assured that the issues with Maulana Fazlur Rehman will be resolved within the framework of the Constitution. He emphasized that all negotiations and agreements will be made in accordance with the country's supreme law, ensuring a lawful and legitimate resolution to the ongoing matters.

Responding to a query, Aqeel Ahmad also offered sage advice to PTI, urging them to engage in dialogue to resolve their issues.

He emphasized that this approach would not only benefit the party itself but also contribute to the welfare of the common man.

By advocating for dialogue, Ahmad stressed the importance of respecting the institutions of the state.

This, he implied, would foster a more constructive and harmonious political environment.



ISLAMABAD: Children having fun on swings at G-8 local park in the Federal Capital. —APP Photo

## Dr Tariq Fazal urges parties to engage in meaningful dialogue

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) MNA Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry Sunday emphasized the importance of stability, achieved through mutual understanding and negotiation among all political parties that those attacking state institutions must learn from past experiences and engage in dialogue to resolve issues peacefully.

Talking with the PTV news channel, Tariq Fazal stressed the need for all political parties to engage in meaningful dialogue to ensure national stability. He stressed to set aside politics of hate, chaos, and frustration, as they are detrimental to the country's well-being.

He urged the need for PTI to adopt a mature approach and engage in democratic dialogue with other political parties as dialogue is the only viable solution to propel the

country forward. He urged PTI to shun confrontation and instead opt for meaningful negotiations to address the nation's challenges.

By doing so, PTI can play a constructive role in breaking the political deadlock and paving the way for a more stable and prosperous Pakistan, he added. Dr. Fazal Chaudhry strongly condemned the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party for its alleged role in the May 9 attacks on military installations.

He emphasized that those responsible for the violence will face the consequences of the law. Chaudhry held the PTI leadership accountable for ruining the lives of its followers and pointedly labelled Imran Khan as the mastermind behind the attacks. Dr. Fazal Chaudhry stated that "the May 9 incident has left a dark stain on

Pakistan's history, with widespread riots and violence inflicting significant damage on government and military properties, adding that the fate of the 25 culprits involved will now be decided by military courts. However, it is crucial to note that these individuals still retain the legal right to appeal to civil courts, a vital safeguard that upholds the principles of justice, he mentioned.

Dr. Fazal emphasized the importance of respecting state institutions while allowing for healthy differences and clashes between political parties. Tariq said that a balanced approach is crucial for Pakistan's progress, where political diversity is acknowledged and state institutions' integrity is protected. This perspective is vital for fostering democratic governance and preventing further unrest in the country, he mentioned.

## Speakers highlights youth role in advancing Kashmir Cause

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Friends of Kashmir (FOK) on Sunday organized a webinar titled "The Role of Youth in Advancing the Kashmir Cause."

The event brought together prominent speakers, including Ghazala Habib (Chairperson, FOK), Abdul Hameed Lone (Vice Chairperson, FOK), Farzana Yaqoob Former Minister AJK, Dr. Khalid Aftab Sulhari (President, IHRO), Naila Altaf (Anchorperson), Nazneen Gillani (Chairperson, NUML Council), Dr. Mujahid Gillani (Kashmiri Leader), Waseem Younas (Chairman, NUML Council), Asim Zaib (Advocate), Shahzad Khan (Youth Council of Pakistan), Fareeha Adrees (Anchorperson), Shaista Safi (Youth Forum for Kashmir), and Waqar Hassan, said a press release.

The session was moderated by Tayyaba Khurshid (Research Officer, CIS-SAJK) and Saadia Sattar (Youth Activist). The dis-

cussion emphasized the critical role of youth in advocating for the Kashmir cause through activism, social media platforms, educational reforms, and cultural preservation. It also highlighted the necessity for informed engagement and strategic actions by young individuals to amplify the Kashmiri narrative.

Speakers emphasized the importance of youth-led initiatives and representation in advancing the Kashmir cause. Nazneen Gillani stressed the potential of young leaders in driving the narrative and building global awareness.

The establishment of youth councils and collaboration with international human rights organizations was proposed to strengthen advocacy efforts. Farzana Yaqoob, Former Minister AJK, emphasized the importance of naming and shaming Indian leaders and perpetrators involved in committing war crimes in Indian

Illegally Occupied Jammu

and Kashmir (IIOJK).

Highlighting the systematic human rights violations, she underscored the plight of innocent civilians, including the use of pellet guns, illegal detentions, and the denial of fundamental freedoms. She also urged the youth to actively raise awareness on international platforms, amplifying the voices of the oppressed and advocating for justice and accountability.

Naila Altaf and Fareeha Adrees highlighted the transformative power of social media in countering misinformation and amplifying the Kashmiri perspective. It was suggested that young individuals use platforms like X, Instagram, and YouTube to create impactful campaigns and raise global awareness. Dr. Khalid Aftab emphasized the importance of introducing Kashmir Studies at schools, colleges, and universities to educate youth about the region's history, culture, and political struggles.

## Consumers advised to inspect gas equipments

RAWALPINDI (INP): The General Manager of Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) Rawalpindi, Umar Hayat, has advised consumers to adopt safe practices, including using high-quality gas appliances and regularly inspecting equipment and pipelines for leaks, to avoid accidents during the winter season.

Speaking to the media, Umar Hayat said that despite awareness campaigns, negligence during winter often results in unfortunate incidents. He specifically warned against using rubber pipes with gas heaters, attributing many past accidents to their use.

The GM highlighted the importance of fostering a culture of safe and efficient gas usage to ensure consumer safety and uninterrupted gas services.

He urged consumers to

avoid excessive gas usage and educate their families and staff about essential safety measures.

Hotel and guesthouse owners were also advised to display safety instruction cards in rooms, outlining guidelines for the proper use of gas heaters. He recommended using soapy water instead of matches for leak detection and seeking assistance from certified plumbers for repairs.

He pointed out that many accidents occur due to a lack of awareness, such as operating electrical switches or devices during a gas leak, which could ignite accumulated gas.

He advised consumers to immediately shut off the main gas valve, open windows and doors for ventilation, and avoid using fans or exhaust systems in such situations. The GM also high-

lighted the importance of proper ventilation in rooms with gas heaters and urged consumers to turn off all gas-powered devices, including stoves, geysers, and heaters, and shut the main gas valve before sleeping.

Umar Hayat encouraged consumers to contact SNGPL's 24/7 helpline at 1199 or visit the nearest SNGPL Rawalpindi office for emergencies. He assured emergency teams are always on standby at complaint centres to address critical situations.

Reiterating SNGPL's commitment to consumer safety, Umar Hayat underscored the company's dedication to preventing accidents through continuous awareness efforts and support. He also assured consumers of an uninterrupted gas supply, particularly during the winter season.

## Pakistan Cultural Forum celebrates Christmas day

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Pakistan Cultural Forum and Secretary General of UBG Zafar Bakhtawari, along with UBG Central Core Committee Member (FPCCI) and former ICCI President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, organized a grand Christmas event in honor of foreign ambassadors.

The Chief Guest at the event was ICCI President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, said a press release issued here on Sunday. The event was attended by ambassadors, diplomats, and prominent personalities from various countries. The purpose of the event was to promote international relations and highlight harmony among different cultures.

Prominent attendees included Khazar Farhadov, Ambassador of Azerbaijan; Yezhan Kustafin, Ambassador of Kazakhstan; Sharif Zada Yusup Toier, Ambassador of Tajikistan; Dr. Ehab Mohamed Abdel Hamid Hassan, Ambassador of Egypt; Rahmat Hidayarta

Kusuma, Charge d'Affaires of Indonesia; Fatima Hariri, Ambassador of Rwanda; Vona Han, Ambassador of Myanmar; Colonel Lutfullah, Deputy Head of Mission of Uzbekistan; and Augustine Christie Rubin, Charge d'Affaires of Sri Lanka. The British High Commission was represented by Alessandro.

In his address, the Chief Guest, ICCI President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, stated that Christmas conveys a message of peace, prosperity, and brotherhood for humanity. He emphasized that Pakistan has always sought friendship and cooperation with the international community.

The presence of distinguished foreign guests at the event is a testament to the open-heartedness and warmth of the Pakistani people, who support harmony and unity on a global scale. Such events further strengthen these relations.

Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that Christmas not only

spreads a message of love and peace but also teaches us to set aside religious and cultural differences to celebrate happiness together. Zafar Bakhtawari added that the event exemplifies how people from diverse religions, cultures, and nationalities can come together to demonstrate love and solidarity.

Ambassador of Azerbaijan Khazar Farhadov, while sharing his thoughts, said that Pakistan and Azerbaijan have always maintained strong relations, and such events further solidify these bonds. Yezhan Kustafin, Ambassador of Kazakhstan, remarked that this event is a beautiful example of the fusion of our shared civilizations.

Pakistan has always been an important partner for us. Dr. Ehab Mohamed Abdel Hamid Hassan, Ambassador of Egypt, appreciated the hospitality of the Pakistani people and mentioned that this Christmas celebration has opened new avenues of friendship.

## Monkey death toll rises

# Call to end human feeding in National Parks

ISLAMABAD (APP): The tragic death of a third monkey from electrocution in Islamabad's Margalla Hills National Park has triggered urgent calls for stricter regulations and heightened public awareness regarding human interactions with wildlife.

The incident, which occurred earlier this week, involved a rhesus monkey fatally electrocuted while climbing power lines in search of food.

This marks the third such fatality in recent months, underscoring the growing dangers of human feeding habits.

According to Sana Raja, a wildlife rescuer, the monkey climbed the electrical infrastructure in search of food scraps left by park visitors.

She believed human feeding has conditioned the animals to associate humans with food, pushing them into unsafe areas

like roads or power lines.

To a query, Sana told APP that human feeding disrupts the instincts of monkeys.

"Monkeys are highly intelligent and opportunistic creatures. When visitors feed them, it conditions them to associate humans with food. This not only leads to unnatural behaviours but also draws them into hazardous environments, such as roads or areas with electrical infrastructure."

She added that the overpopulation of rhesus monkeys in the park is a direct consequence of human feeding habits.

"Their numbers have grown manifold over the years, causing increased competition for resources, injuries, and aggression toward humans. Many monkeys suffer severe health issues from eating trash, including fungal infections in their

departmental promotion courses were organized during the ongoing year, in which 1,108 police officers received training according to international standards from senior police officers and experts. These courses included advanced course, upper-class course, intermediate course, a lower course, a basic recruit course, a drill instructor course, and a VIP protection course.

Additionally, during this timeframe, 87 training workshops were also organized at the Capital Police College Islamabad, in which 2,610 police officers

attended lectures and participated in practical workshops conducted by experts from various organizations to enhance their skills.

These workshops covered topics such as Basic and Modern Investigation, Pakistan Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure, Crime Scene Investigation, Departmental Administrative Affairs, Police Order 2002, Interviews, Interrogation, Human and Refugee Rights, Gender-Based Violence, Crimes Against Women, Investigation of Fatal Accidents,

Countering Terrorism Financing, Cyber Crime Investigation, etc.

Moreover, to train citizens, the Capital Police College also organized self-defence and weapon handling courses, where citizens were trained in weapon handling, swimming, live firing practice, rappelling, obstacle crossing, horse riding, and archery.

The purpose of these training courses is to provide citizens with knowledge about weapons, their safe use, and how to defend themselves in emergencies.



digestive systems."

Environmental experts have raised concerns about the broader ecological impact.

Sakhwat Ali, an environmental scientist warned, "Feeding wildlife disrupts ecosystems. Monkeys and other animals may abandon their natural diet, leading to malnutrition and aggression within populations.

This not only affects their health but also creates an imbalance in the ecosystem, putting undue pressure on human-animal coexistence."

Many park visitors expressed regret over the monkey deaths, admitting they were unaware of the consequences of their actions. "I thought I was helping by sharing my snacks with

them," one visitor admitted. "Now I see it's more harmful than I imagined. I'll think twice in the future."

Others shared their sorrow and emphasized the need for stricter rules. "It's heartbreaking. We need better education and enforcement to stop this," said Sadia Babar, a frequent visitor to the park. When contacted Umar Bilal, spokesperson for the Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB), said "These deaths are preventable. We appeal to the public to help us protect our wildlife by following the guidelines."

The IWMB, he said has ramped up efforts to curb harmful practices. Park rangers are intensifying patrols, distributing educational materials, and urging visitors to follow park rules prohibiting feeding and littering. "The public must understand

that their actions have consequences," Umar Bilal stressed. "By respecting park guidelines, visitors can play a crucial role in safeguarding our wildlife and ensuring a safer environment for all species."

To prevent further tragedies, conservationists and environmentalists are advocating for stricter penalties for violations, increased signage to educate visitors, installation of monkey-proof waste bins to discourage scavenging and ongoing public awareness campaigns.

As the Margalla Hills National Park grapples with the challenges of preserving its natural habitat, the responsibility lies not just with authorities but with every visitor. By respecting nature and its inhabitants, the delicate balance of the ecosystem can be protected for generations to come.



**IE ambassador holds talks**

KABUL (BNA): The Acting Ambassador of Afghanistan in Islamabad, Pakistan, has announced a meeting with the Deputy Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for Afghanistan. Mawlawi Sardar Ahmad Shakib, the Acting Ambassador of Afghanistan in Islamabad, posted on his X account today, stating that he had met with Mishaal Mutlaq Al-Shammari, the Deputy Ambassador of Saudi Arabia for Afghanistan.

**100m in revenue generated**

PUL-E-ALAM (BNA): The Logar Breshna Directorate has collected over 100 million Afghanis in revenue over the past eight months. Mullah Mohammad Fahim Mansoor, head of the Logar Breshna Directorate, told Bakhtar News Agency that this directorate collected 135 million Afghanis in revenue during the past eight months of the current year. This figure represents a 50% increase compared to the target set by the general administration of Breshna Company.

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

# Mass deportation of Afghan families from neighboring countries

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation has reported the deportation of more than 3,800 Afghan families from neighboring countries in the past month.

Abdul Mutalib Haqqani, spokesperson for the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, stated that out of this number, fourteen families were deported from Turkey, 1,017 families from Pakistan, and the rest from Iran, all of whom have returned to Afghanistan.

The spokesperson added: "In the past month, 3,845 Afghan families have returned to the country from neighboring countries, including fourteen families from Turkey, 1,017 families from Pakistan, and the rest from Iran. Assistance has been provided to returnees at border crossings, and some have even been transported to their areas."

Simultaneously, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has also reported the deportation of hundreds of thousands of Afghan migrants from Iran this year. According to the UN agency, Iran plans to deport two million undocumented foreign nationals by March next year.

Caroline Gluck, spokesperson for UNHCR in Afghanistan, stated: "In the past year hundreds of thousands of people have been returned to Afghanistan many of them forced back despite UNHCR's non-return advisory. The authorities in Tehran have said that they plan to expel two million undocumented foreigners by next march; and new arrivals here have significantly increased since September. UNHCR's position is that all returns should be voluntary, and carried out in safety and dignity."

Meanwhile, some citizens recently deported from Iran have expressed serious challenges. They call on officials in the caretaker government to provide them with basic living facilities.

"I have many problems; I have 12 to 13 dependents, some of whom are sick, and my parents are elderly," said Sher Mohammad, a migrant deported from Iran.

"I am unemployed. I have no work, no place to sleep, and no food," said Eslahuddin, another deportee.

Earlier, the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation also reported that over 900,000 Afghan migrants returned to the country from Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan in the first eight months of the current solar year.

# Minister meets with scholars, tribal leaders



KABUL (BNA): Mullah Abdul Latif Mansoor, the Acting Minister of Energy and Water, met with several scholars and tribal elders from Kamdih District in Nooristan Province.

Discussions centered on implementing water and energy projects in the province, particularly in Kamdih District.

The press office of the Ministry of Energy and Water, in a statement, said that the scholars and tribal elders from Kamdih District requested the construction of a water dam and the implementation of electricity supply projects in the district during their meeting with the Acting Minister.

In response, the Acting Minister assured the scholars and tribal elders that the survey for constructing a water dam in the district has been completed, and work on its design is underway.

He added that the project would be included in the next year's budget and promised full cooperation within the available resources and balanced development plans.

# Pashdan Dam: A rising tourist, economic hub

HERAT (TOLONews): With the commencement of water collection at the Pashdan Dam, this dam, located 15 kilometers east of Herat city, has transformed into a major tourist destination. Thousands of people from Herat and other provinces visit the dam daily to see its water.

"I have come from Faryab, and this is a very good place for recreation. It is very crowded here, and we are happy," Fazl Rahman, a resident of Faryab, told TOLONews.

"In past years, such a place was a dream, and no one thought it would become a spot for people from other provinces and even the farthest corners of Afghanistan to visit," said Ahmad Shah Nadiri, a resident of Herat. The process of water collection at the Pashdan Dam began about a month ago. Due to its proximity to Herat city, it has attracted considerable attention from residents.

Mohammad Arif Achakzai, the manager of the Pashdan Dam project, said: "Pashdan Dam has no equal in Herat in terms of recreation. Its location, land, and beauty make it unparalleled in Herat. No matter how many people come here, there is ample space and vast land."

According to project officials, the final work on the dam is ongoing and will be completed within a few months. They added that Pashdan Dam is set to become a major recreational area in Herat. The establishment of restaurants, shops, and other facilities in the dam area is considered crucial for attracting domestic and foreign tourists.

"When the dam becomes a recreational spot for people, it naturally carries economic appeal. This means many people will work there—running restaurants, managing hotels, boating, and engaging in other water-related activities."

This dam will attract both domestic and foreign tourists," said Mohammad Rafiq Shahir, head of the Herat Experts Council.

In addition to storing 54 million cubic meters of water, the Pashdan Dam has the capacity to irrigate 13,000 hectares of agricultural land and produce two megawatts of electricity.

# New polio vaccination campaign set to launch

KABUL (Ariana News): The "Afghanistan Polio-Free" organization announced that a new round of polio vaccinations will begin today (Monday) in various provinces of Afghanistan.

The organization did not specify which provinces will be targeted or how long the vaccination campaign will last.

Afghanistan and Pakistan are the only two countries in the world where polio has not been eradicated.

On December 4, 2023, the World Health Organization (WHO) issued a statement reporting a 283% increase in polio cases in Afghanistan. According to the WHO, the number of positive environmental samples for wild poliovirus type 1 in Afghanistan in 2024 reached 84, compared to 62 cases in 2023.

The Ministry of Public Health claimed in November 2024 that no new cases of polio had been reported in Afghanistan for the year.

# IE strengthens efforts to halt low-quality fuel imports

NIMROZ (BNA): A delegation has traveled to Nimroz to prevent the importation of low-quality fuel and urged the province's traders not to bring substandard fuel into the country.

According to Bakhtar News Agency, Mawlawi Shamsuddin Pahlawan, the head of the General Office of Orders and Decrees and the head of the delegation, which consists of representatives from relevant government officials, said during a meeting with the local leadership and fuel traders in Nimroz that low-quality fuel not only damages vehicles and machinery but also harms public health, leading to various illnesses.

He emphasized that the purpose of the delegation's visit to Nimroz was to stop the importation of substandard fuel and urged traders to cooperate with government institutions in this regard.

Sheikh Mohammad Qasim Khalid, the Governor of Nimroz, also mentioned that the transfer of low-quality fuel through Nimroz has been largely prevented, and no one has been permitted to import such fuel. In the meeting, traders assured the delegation that they would never harm the public or the country by importing low-quality fuel.

# Norwegian Chargé d’Affaires meet Stanikzai



KABUL (Ariana News): The Norwegian Chargé d’Affaires for Afghanistan, Per Albert Ilsaas met with IEA's Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs, Sher Muhammad Abbas Stanikzai, in Kabul.

Welcoming the diplomat's visit to Kabul, Stanikzai underscored the importance of political relations between Afghanistan and Norway, the foreign ministry said in a statement.

In addition to focusing on bilateral political, humanitarian, and other pertinent issues, the two sides expressed hope that continued engagement would lead to constructive solutions to related issues.

This comes two weeks after the Foreign Ministry Spokesman Abdul Qahar Balkhi expressed disappointment regarding the decision by the Norwegian government to downgrade diplomatic relations with Afghanistan. Balkhi said in a post on X that such decisions should not be linked with internal affairs of other countries.

"Diplomatic engagement is most effective when it fosters mutual understanding and respect, even amidst differing viewpoints," he stated. "Access to consular services is a fundamental right of all nationals. We strongly urge all parties to prioritize this principle in the spirit of international cooperation," he added.

# Concerns raised over declining reading culture in Uruzgan

URUZGAN (TOLONews): Residents of Uruzgan province have expressed concerns about the declining culture of reading in the province and have called on authorities to take serious steps to promote book reading.

They believe that widespread use of social media has distanced many young people from books and reading.

"Reading has been forgotten. No one goes to libraries or places designated for reading," said Hekmatullah Hakimi, a resident of Uruzgan.

"I consume about 20 to 25 gigabytes of internet in a month and spend most of my time on PUBG, TikTok, and other programs in the virtual space," said Naveed Ahmad, another resident of the province.

Experts warn that excessive use of mobile phones and social media can have significant negative effects on individuals' physical and mental health.

"Excessive use of mobile phone screens can affect the brain and heart, and the screen light can cause serious damage to the eyes," said Nooruddin Nurzad, a mental health specialist.

"Social media has a significant impact on young people's studies. They spend a lot of time on these platforms but do not search for topics that are beneficial to them," said Azizullah Manzoor, a university student.

Local officials in Uruzgan say they have plans to encourage young people to read.

Abdul Ghafoor Kamran, head of the youth department of Uruzgan's Information and Culture Directorate, said: "We have held several programs in Uruzgan province to encourage young people to read. The minds of young people are capable of learning, and we strive to continue these programs consistently."

He added that in the current solar year, several book exhibitions have been held in the city of Tarinkot and the districts of Uruzgan province to promote the culture of reading.

# Int’l envoys express grave concern over Afghanistan’s current situation

KABUL (Khaama Press): Special envoys from various countries have stated that achieving long-term stability in Afghanistan requires an inclusive national dialogue and, through this process, the rule of law must be ensured in the country. In a joint statement, special envoys from over ten countries, including the United States and the European Union, announced the results of a meeting held in Geneva. The statement expressed "grave concern" over decisions made by the Taliban, especially the ban on girls studying medical fields.

The statement further emphasized that Afghanistan needs an "inclusive political system" where the rule of law is guaranteed. The envoys also expressed support for the Doha process and the UNSC's resolution to appoint a special representative for resolving the political crisis in Afghanistan.

Representatives from Canada, the European Union, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Norway, South Korea, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States attended the meeting and stressed the importance of establishing a process that leads to the rule of law in Afghanistan.

They noted that over the past three and a half years of Taliban rule, more than 80 "repressive and discriminatory" decrees had been issued, aimed at depriving Afghan women and girls of their right to education.

These policies have been described by the special envoys as "unacceptable," and they called for the immediate reversal of such actions. The envoys also expressed "grave" concerns over recent "terrorist" attacks in Kabul and the surrounding region, highlighting that "some terrorist groups still reside securely within Afghanistan's borders, and these groups have the capability to plan and carry out both domestic and cross-border terrorist attacks."

# Educated youth in Wakhan district urge action on unemployment challenges

B A D A K H S H A N (TOLONews): A number of educated youth in Wakhan District, Badakhshan Province, have expressed concerns about the lack of employment opportunities.

These youths, who have completed their undergraduate and postgraduate studies, say that despite having the necessary skills and knowledge, job opportunities are not available to them.

"Many of our young people are unemployed and have no income or resources. We urge the Islamic Emirate to recruit our youth into the ranks of the security forces," said Ramadan, a resident of Wakhan.

"Our request to the Islamic Emirate is to support unemployed youth and create job opportunities for them," said Samiullah, another resident of Badakhshan.

Wakhan, a border district in Badakhshan with a population of over 18,000, is located 200 kilometers from Faizabad, the provincial capital.

Local officials in Badakhshan said that since the rise of the Islamic Emirate, a significant number of young people have been recruited into the security forces and government departments, and efforts to create new job opportunities are ongoing.

Hekmatullah Mohammedi, head of information at the department of Information and Culture in Badakhshan, said: "Although three years have passed since the Islamic Emirate took power, many young people have been recruited into the security forces and civilian administration. We are working to provide more employment opportunities for other young people who are part of the workforce in the future."

Unemployment remains one of the major challenges facing the citizens of Afghanistan, especially educated youth. These young people have consistently urged the caretaker government to take serious steps to address this issue.

at the department of Information and Culture in Badakhshan, said: "Although three years have passed since the Islamic Emirate took power, many young people have been recruited into the security forces and civilian administration. We are working to provide more employment opportunities for other young people who are part of the workforce in the future."

Unemployment remains one of the major challenges facing the citizens of Afghanistan, especially educated youth. These young people have consistently urged the caretaker government to take serious steps to address this issue.

at the department of Information and Culture in Badakhshan, said: "Although three years have passed since the Islamic Emirate took power, many young people have been recruited into the security forces and civilian administration. We are working to provide more employment opportunities for other young people who are part of the workforce in the future."

Unemployment remains one of the major challenges facing the citizens of Afghanistan, especially educated youth. These young people have consistently urged the caretaker government to take serious steps to address this issue.

at the department of Information and Culture in Badakhshan, said: "Although three years have passed since the Islamic Emirate took power, many young people have been recruited into the security forces and civilian administration. We are working to provide more employment opportunities for other young people who are part of the workforce in the future."

Unemployment remains one of the major challenges facing the citizens of Afghanistan, especially educated youth. These young people have consistently urged the caretaker government to take serious steps to address this issue.

at the department of Information and Culture in Badakhshan, said: "Although three years have passed since the Islamic Emirate took power, many young people have been recruited into the security forces and civilian administration. We are working to provide more employment opportunities for other young people who are part of the workforce in the future."

Unemployment remains one of the major challenges facing the citizens of Afghanistan, especially educated youth. These young people have consistently urged the caretaker government to take serious steps to address this issue.

# Decree of Amir-ul-Mu’mineen on retirement rights

KABUL (BNA): In accordance with the execution of retirement rights for retired employees and current staff whose salaries have been subjected to retirement deductions, the following directives are approved:

Article 1

The Supreme Court is instructed to establish dedicated courts for handling retirement rights cases in the central administration. This measure is based on the necessity and the volume of relevant cases. These courts will resolve claims concerning retirement rights in accordance with Sharia law.

Article 2

1. Retirees from ministries and governmental institutions are entitled to submit their claims to the specialized retirement rights courts to assert their retirement entitlements.

2. Applicants must prepare their petitions in compliance with Article 32 of the Administrative Procedures Manual. These petitions will be formally registered by the court.

3. The specialized courts are obligated to officially process and register the petitions of retirees.

4. The court will share the petition with the Ministry of Finance's representative and seek a response, which will be taken into consideration in resolving the matter but will not hold conclusive weight in the decision.

5. The Ministry of Finance is required to appoint a competent representative to attend the court proceedings.

6. Following the submission of the retiree's claims and the response from the Ministry of Finance, the court must record the case and request supporting evidence from the claimant.

7. Upon submission of necessary documents by the retiree, the court must officially verify these with the ministry or institution from which the retiree was employed.

8. The respective ministry or institution is required to provide verified records of the retiree's employment and entitlements to the court, which will issue its ruling based on Sharia law.

Article 3

1. If the claimant is the retiree's legal representative, they must present a valid Sharia-compliant power of attorney.

2. If the claimant is the retiree's heir, they must provide an inheritance certificate in accordance with legal procedures.

Article 4

1. If the retiree served in a non-budgetary institution (e.g., municipalities), they must submit their claims to the specialized court assigned to handle retirement rights in such institutions.

2. The provisions of Article 2 (clauses 1–5) also apply to retirees from non-budgetary institutions.

3. During the hearing of claims concerning non-budgetary institutions, the court must summon a representative from the institution and proceed as per Article 2 (clauses 5–7).

4. Non-budgetary institutions must appoint competent representatives to attend court proceedings upon request.

5. After the retiree provides their documentation, the court must verify these with the institution from which they retired.

6. Non-budgetary institutions are required to provide verified information about the retiree's service and entitlements to the court, which will then issue its decision.

Article 5

1. The Commission for the Regulation of Organizational Structures and Salaries is tasked with preparing a schedule to process retirement payments, ensuring that undue pressure is not placed on the general budget.

2. The specialized courts must issue rulings based on the schedule provided by the commission.

Article 6

The provisions outlined in Articles 1–4 are applicable to retirees who retired before the establishment of the Islamic Emirate.

Article 7

1. The Ministry of Finance is required to process the retirement contributions deducted from salaries after the establishment of the Islamic Emirate, up to the issuance of Decree No. 4802 (dated 21/9/1445 AH), through the relevant budgetary units.

2. Non-budgetary institutions (e.g., municipalities) are similarly required to process such contributions for their employees during the same period.

3. For current employees, the Ministry of Finance must process the retirement contributions deducted within this timeframe, in accordance with established procedures, through the relevant budgetary units.

4. Non-budgetary institutions must also process the retirement contributions of current employees in the same manner.

5. In cases covered by clauses 1–4 of this article, no court ruling is required.

Article 8

This decree is effective from the date of its approval and must be published in the official gazette.

resolving the matter but will not hold conclusive weight in the decision.

5. The Ministry of Finance is required to appoint a competent representative to attend the court proceedings.

6. Following the submission of the retiree's claims and the response from the Ministry of Finance, the court must record the case and request supporting evidence from the claimant.

7. Upon submission of necessary documents by the retiree, the court must officially verify these with the ministry or institution from which the retiree was employed.

8. The respective ministry or institution is required to provide verified records of the retiree's employment and entitlements to the court, which will issue its ruling based on Sharia law.

Article 3

1. If the claimant is the retiree's legal representative, they must present a valid Sharia-compliant power of attorney.

2. If the claimant is the retiree's heir, they must provide an inheritance certificate in accordance with legal procedures.

Article 4

1. If the retiree served in a non-budgetary institution (e.g., municipalities), they must submit their claims to the specialized court assigned to handle retirement rights in such institutions.

2. The provisions of Article 2 (clauses 1–5) also apply to retirees from non-budgetary institutions.

3. During the hearing of claims concerning non-budgetary institutions, the court must summon a representative from the institution and proceed as per Article 2 (clauses 5–7).

4. Non-budgetary institutions must appoint competent representatives to attend court proceedings upon request.

5. After the retiree provides their documentation, the court must verify these with the institution from which they retired.

6. Non-budgetary institutions are required to provide verified information about the retiree's service and entitlements to the court, which will then issue its decision.

Article 5

1. The Commission for the Regulation of Organizational Structures and Salaries is tasked with preparing a schedule to process retirement payments, ensuring that undue pressure is not placed on the general budget.

2. The specialized courts must issue rulings based on the schedule provided by the commission.

Article 6

The provisions outlined in Articles 1–4 are applicable to retirees who retired before the establishment of the Islamic Emirate.

Article 7

1. The Ministry of Finance is required to process the retirement contributions deducted from salaries after the establishment of the Islamic Emirate, up to the issuance of Decree No. 4802 (dated 21/9/1445 AH), through the relevant budgetary units.

2. Non-budgetary institutions (e.g., municipalities) are similarly required to process such contributions for their employees during the same period.

3. For current employees, the Ministry of Finance must process the retirement contributions deducted within this timeframe, in accordance with established procedures, through the relevant budgetary units.

4. Non-budgetary institutions must also process the retirement contributions of current employees in the same manner.

5. In cases covered by clauses 1–4 of this article, no court ruling is required.

Article 8

This decree is effective from the date of its approval and must be published in the official gazette.

resolving the matter but will not hold conclusive weight in the decision.

5. The Ministry of Finance is required to appoint a competent representative to attend the court proceedings.

6. Following the submission of the retiree's claims and the response from the Ministry of Finance, the court must record the case and request supporting evidence from the claimant.

7. Upon submission of necessary documents by the retiree, the court must officially verify these with the ministry or institution from which the retiree was employed.

8. The respective ministry or institution is required to provide verified records of the retiree's employment and entitlements to the court, which will issue its ruling based on Sharia law.

Article 3

1. If the claimant is the retiree's legal representative, they must present a valid Sharia-compliant power of attorney.

2. If the claimant is the retiree's heir, they must provide an inheritance certificate in accordance with legal procedures.

Article 4

1. If the retiree served in a non-budgetary institution (e.g., municipalities), they must submit their claims to the specialized court assigned to handle retirement rights in such institutions.

2. The provisions of Article 2 (clauses 1–5) also apply to retirees from non-budgetary institutions.

3. During the hearing of claims concerning non-budgetary institutions, the court must summon a representative from the institution and proceed as per Article 2 (clauses 5–7).

4. Non-budgetary institutions must appoint competent representatives to attend court proceedings upon request.

5. After the retiree provides their documentation, the court must verify these with the institution from which they retired.

6. Non-budgetary institutions are required to provide verified information about the retiree's service and entitlements to the court, which will then issue its decision.

Article 5

1. The Commission for the Regulation of Organizational Structures and Salaries is tasked with preparing a schedule to process retirement payments, ensuring that undue pressure is not placed on the general budget.

2. The specialized courts must issue rulings based on the schedule provided by the commission.

Article 6

The provisions outlined in Articles 1–4 are applicable to retirees who retired before the establishment of the Islamic Emirate.

Article 7

1. The Ministry of Finance is required to process the retirement contributions deducted from salaries after the establishment of the Islamic Emirate, up to the issuance of Decree No. 4802 (dated 21/9/1445 AH), through the relevant budgetary units.

2. Non-budgetary institutions (e.g., municipalities) are similarly required to process such contributions for their employees during the same period.

3. For current employees, the Ministry of Finance must process the retirement contributions deducted within this timeframe, in accordance with established procedures, through the relevant budgetary units.

4. Non-budgetary institutions must also process the retirement contributions of current employees in the same manner.

5. In cases covered by clauses 1–4 of this article, no court ruling is required.

Article 8

This decree is effective from the date of its approval and must be published in the official gazette.

resolving the matter but will not hold conclusive weight in the decision.

5. The Ministry of Finance is required to appoint a competent representative to attend the court proceedings.

6. Following the submission of the retiree's claims and the response from the Ministry of Finance, the court must record the case and request supporting evidence from the claimant.

7. Upon submission of necessary documents by the retiree, the court must officially verify these with the ministry or institution from which the retiree was employed.

8. The respective ministry or institution is required to provide verified records of the retiree's employment and entitlements to the court, which will issue its ruling based on Sharia law.

Article 3

1. If the claimant is the retiree's legal representative, they must present a valid Sharia-compliant power of attorney.

2. If the claimant is the retiree's heir, they must provide an inheritance certificate in accordance with legal procedures.

Article 4

1. If the retiree served in a non-budgetary institution (e.g., municipalities), they must submit their claims to the specialized court assigned to handle retirement rights in such institutions.

2. The provisions of Article 2 (clauses 1–5) also apply to retirees from non-budgetary institutions.

3. During the hearing of claims concerning non-budgetary institutions, the court must summon a representative from the institution and proceed as per Article 2 (clauses 5–7).

4. Non-budgetary institutions must appoint competent representatives to attend court proceedings upon request.

5. After the retiree provides their documentation, the court must verify these with the institution from which they retired.

6. Non-budgetary institutions are required to provide verified information about the retiree's service and entitlements to the court, which will then issue its decision.

Article 5

1. The Commission for the Regulation of Organizational Structures and Salaries is tasked with preparing a schedule to process retirement payments, ensuring that undue pressure is not placed on the general budget.

2. The specialized courts must issue rulings based on the schedule provided by the commission.

Article 6

The provisions outlined in Articles 1–4 are applicable to retirees who retired before the establishment of the Islamic Emirate.

Article 7

1. The Ministry of Finance is required to process the retirement contributions deducted from salaries after the establishment of the Islamic Emirate, up to the issuance of Decree No. 4802 (dated 21/9/1445 AH), through the relevant budgetary units.

2. Non-budgetary institutions (e.g., municipalities) are similarly required to process such contributions for their employees during the same period.

3. For current employees, the Ministry of Finance must process the retirement contributions deducted within this timeframe, in accordance with established procedures, through the relevant budgetary units.

4. Non-budgetary institutions must also process the retirement contributions of current employees in the same manner.

5. In cases covered by clauses 1–4 of this article, no court ruling is required.

Article 8

This decree is effective from the date of its approval and must be published in the official gazette.

resolving the matter but will not hold conclusive weight in the decision.

5. The Ministry of Finance is required to appoint a competent representative to attend the court proceedings.

6. Following the submission of the retiree's claims and the response from the Ministry of Finance, the court must record the case and request supporting evidence from the claimant.

7. Upon submission of necessary documents by the retiree, the court must officially verify these with the ministry or institution from which the retiree was employed.

8. The respective ministry or institution is required to provide verified records of the retiree's employment and entitlements to the court, which will issue its ruling based on Sharia law.

Article 3

1. If the claimant is the retiree's legal representative, they must present a valid Sharia-compliant power of attorney.

2. If the claimant is the retiree's heir, they must provide an inheritance certificate in accordance with legal procedures.

Article 4

1. If the retiree served in a non-budgetary institution (e.g., municipalities), they must submit their claims to the specialized court assigned to handle retirement rights in such institutions.

2. The provisions of Article 2 (clauses 1–5) also apply to retirees from non-budgetary institutions.

3. During the hearing of claims concerning non-budgetary institutions, the court must summon a representative from the institution and proceed as per Article 2 (clauses 5–7).

4. Non-budgetary institutions must appoint competent representatives to attend court proceedings upon request.

5. After the retiree provides their documentation, the court must verify these with the institution from which they retired.

6. Non-budgetary institutions are required to provide verified information about the retiree's service and entitlements to the court, which will then issue its decision.

Article 5

1. The Commission for the Regulation of Organizational Structures and Salaries is tasked with preparing a schedule to process retirement payments, ensuring that undue pressure is not placed on the general budget.

2. The specialized courts must issue rulings based on the schedule provided by the commission.

Article 6

The provisions outlined in Articles 1–4 are applicable to retirees who retired before the establishment of the Islamic Emirate.

Article 7

1. The Ministry of Finance is required to process the retirement contributions deducted from salaries after the establishment of the Islamic Emirate, up to the issuance of Decree No. 4802 (dated 21/9/1445 AH), through the relevant budgetary units.

2. Non-budgetary institutions (e.g., municipalities) are similarly required to process such contributions for their employees during the same period.

3. For current employees, the Ministry of Finance must process the retirement contributions deducted within this timeframe, in accordance with established procedures, through the relevant budgetary units.

4. Non-budgetary institutions must also process the retirement contributions of current employees in the same manner.

5. In cases covered by clauses 1–4 of this article, no court ruling is required.

Article 8

This decree is effective from the date of its approval and must be published in the official gazette.

resolving the matter but will not hold conclusive weight in the decision.

5. The Ministry of Finance is required to appoint a competent representative to attend the court proceedings.

6. Following the submission of the retiree's claims and the response from the Ministry of Finance, the court must record the case and request supporting evidence from the claimant.

7. Upon submission of necessary documents by the retiree, the court must officially verify these with the ministry or institution from which the retiree was employed.

8. The respective ministry or institution is required to provide verified records of the retiree's employment and entitlements to the court, which will issue its ruling based on Sharia law.

Article 3

1. If the claimant is the retiree's legal representative, they must present a valid Sharia-compliant power of attorney.

2. If the claimant is the retiree's heir, they must provide an inheritance certificate in accordance with legal procedures.

Article 4

1. If the retiree served in a non-budgetary institution (e.g., municipalities), they must submit their claims to the specialized court assigned to handle retirement rights in such institutions.

2. The provisions of Article 2 (clauses 1–5) also apply to retirees from non-budgetary institutions.

3. During the hearing of claims concerning non-budgetary institutions, the court must summon a representative from the institution and proceed as per Article 2 (clauses 5–7).

4. Non-budgetary institutions must appoint competent representatives to attend court proceedings upon request.

5. After the retiree provides their documentation, the court must verify these with the institution from which they retired.

6. Non-budgetary institutions are required to provide verified information about the retiree's service and entitlements to the court, which will then issue its decision.

Article 5

1. The Commission for the Regulation of Organizational Structures and Salaries is tasked with preparing a schedule to process retirement payments, ensuring that undue pressure is not placed on the general budget.

2. The specialized courts must issue rulings based on the schedule provided by the commission.

Article 6

The provisions outlined in Articles 1–4 are applicable to retirees who retired before the establishment of the Islamic Emirate.

Article 7

1. The Ministry of Finance is required to process the retirement contributions deducted from salaries after the establishment of the Islamic Emirate, up to the issuance of Decree No. 4802 (dated 21/9/1445 AH), through the relevant budgetary units.

2. Non-budgetary institutions (e.g., municipalities) are similarly required to process such contributions for their employees during the same period.

3. For current employees, the Ministry of Finance must process the retirement contributions deducted within this timeframe, in accordance with established procedures, through the relevant budgetary units.

4. Non-budgetary institutions must also process the retirement contributions of current employees in the same manner.

5. In cases covered by clauses 1–4 of this article, no court ruling is required.

Article 8

This decree is effective from the date of its approval and must be published in the official gazette.

resolving the matter but will not hold conclusive weight in the decision.

5. The Ministry of Finance is required to appoint a competent representative to attend the court proceedings.

6. Following the submission of the retiree's claims and the response from the Ministry of Finance, the court must record the case and request supporting evidence from the claimant.

7. Upon submission of necessary documents by the retiree, the court must officially verify these with the ministry or institution from which the retiree was employed.

8. The respective ministry or institution is required to provide verified records of the retiree's employment and entitlements to the court, which will issue its ruling based on Sharia law.

Article 3

1. If the claimant is the retiree's legal representative, they must present a valid Sharia-compliant power of attorney.

2. If the claimant is the retiree's heir, they must provide an inheritance certificate in accordance with legal procedures.

Article 4

1. If the retiree served in a non-budgetary institution (e.g., municipalities), they must submit their claims to the specialized court assigned to handle retirement rights in such institutions.

2. The provisions of Article 2 (clauses 1–5) also apply to retirees from non-budgetary institutions.

3. During the hearing of claims concerning non-budgetary institutions, the court must summon a representative from the institution and proceed as per Article 2 (clauses 5–7).

4. Non-budgetary institutions must appoint competent representatives to attend court proceedings upon request.

5. After the retiree provides their documentation, the court must verify these with the institution from which they retired.

6. Non-budgetary institutions are required to provide verified information about the retiree's service and entitlements to the court, which will then issue its decision.

Article 5

1. The Commission for the Regulation of Organizational Structures and Salaries is tasked with preparing a schedule to process retirement payments, ensuring that undue pressure is not placed on the general budget.

2. The specialized courts must issue rulings based on the schedule provided by the commission.

Article 6

The provisions outlined in Articles 1–4 are applicable to retirees who retired before the establishment of the Islamic Emirate.

Article 7

1. The Ministry of Finance is required to process the retirement contributions deducted from salaries after the establishment of the Islamic Emirate, up to the issuance of Decree No. 4802 (dated 21/9/1445 AH), through the relevant budgetary units.

2. Non-budgetary institutions (e.g., municipalities) are similarly required to process such contributions for their employees during the same period.

3. For current employees, the Ministry of Finance must process the retirement contributions deducted within this timeframe, in accordance with established procedures, through the relevant budgetary units.

4. Non-budgetary institutions must also process the retirement contributions of current employees in the same manner.

5. In cases covered by clauses 1–4 of this article, no court ruling is required.

Article 8

This decree is effective from the date of its approval and must be published in the official gazette.

resolving the matter but will not hold conclusive weight in the decision.

5. The Ministry of Finance is required to appoint a competent representative to attend the court proceedings.

6. Following the submission of the retiree's claims and the response from the Ministry of Finance, the court must record the case and request supporting evidence from the claimant.

7. Upon submission of necessary documents by the retiree, the court must officially verify these with the ministry or institution from which the retiree was employed.

8. The respective ministry or institution is required to provide verified records of the retiree's employment and entitlements to the court, which will issue its ruling based on Sharia law.

Article 3

1. If the claimant is the retiree's legal representative, they must present a valid Sharia-compliant power of attorney.

2. If the claimant is the retiree's heir, they must provide an inheritance certificate in accordance with legal procedures.

Article 4

1. If the retiree served in a non-budgetary institution (e.g., municipalities), they must submit their claims to the specialized court assigned to handle retirement rights in such institutions.

2. The provisions of Article 2 (clauses 1–5) also apply to retirees from non-budgetary institutions.

3. During the hearing of claims concerning non-budgetary institutions, the court must summon a representative from the institution and proceed as per Article 2 (clauses 5–7).

4. Non-budgetary institutions must appoint competent representatives to attend court proceedings upon request.

5. After the retiree provides their documentation, the court must verify these with the institution from which they retired.

6. Non-budgetary institutions are required to provide verified information about the retiree's service and entitlements to the court, which will then issue its decision.

Article 5

1. The Commission for the Regulation of Organizational Structures and Salaries is tasked with preparing a schedule to process retirement payments, ensuring that undue pressure is not placed on the general budget.

2. The specialized courts must issue rulings based on the schedule provided by the commission.

Article 6

The provisions outlined in Articles 1–4 are applicable to retirees who retired before the establishment of the Islamic Emirate.

Article 7

1. The Ministry of Finance is required to process the retirement contributions deducted from salaries after the establishment of the Islamic Emirate, up to the issuance of Decree No. 4802 (dated 21/9/1445 AH), through the relevant budgetary units.

2. Non-budgetary institutions (e.g., municipalities) are similarly required to process such contributions for their employees during the same period.

3. For current employees, the Ministry of Finance must process the retirement contributions deducted within this timeframe, in accordance with established procedures, through the relevant budgetary units.

4. Non-budgetary institutions must also process the retirement contributions of current employees in the same manner.

5. In cases covered by clauses 1–4 of this article, no court ruling is required.

Article 8

This decree is effective from the date of its approval and must be published in the official gazette.



# Kundi announces committees for peace, rights of KP

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Sunday announced the formation of political and technical committees in line with the unanimous decision made at the All Parties Conference.

The committees aim to promote harmony among political parties and address key issues in the province.

The notification, signed by Governor Kundi, reveals the establishment of an 11-member political committee and a 12-member technical committee.

The political committee, chaired by Governor Faisal Karim Kundi, includes the following members Federal Minister Engineer Amir

Maqam Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, Sikandar Hayat Khan Sherpao Qaumi Watan Party, Maulana Atta-ur-Rehman Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl, Mian Iftikhar Hussain Awami National Party, Syed Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha Pakistan Peoples Party, Mohsin Dawar National Democratic Movement, Professor Muhammad Ibrahim Khan Jamaat-e-Islami, Mahmood Khan Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Parliamentarian, Pervez Khattak Former Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shaukat Ullah Khan Representative of merged districts.

This committee will work on enhancing cooperation between political parties

and will make recommendations to reach consensus on significant matters, fostering a unified political environment in the province.

Additionally, a 12-member technical committee has been established, which will oversee the monitoring of developmental projects and provide technical suggestions.

The members of this committee include, Dr. Ibadullah Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, Maulana Lutf-ur-Rehman Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl, Ahmed Karim Kundi Pakistan Peoples Party, Inayat Ullah Khan Jamaat-e-Islami, Akhundzada Sikandar Zaman Qaumi Watan Party, Sangeen Khan

(Awami National Party), Kifayat Ullah Khan National Democratic Movement, Malik Habib Noor Orakzai Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Parliamentarian, Ghazan Jamal Merged Districts, Akhundzada Chattaan Merged Districts, Hamaayat Ullah Khan Expert and Musharaf Rasool Expert.

The technical committee will focus on advising on developmental issues and promoting cooperation between different parties on key technical matters.

These committees are part of efforts to foster coordination and mutual understanding, ensuring progress and harmony in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.



PESHAWAR: The still image taken from the video shared by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief minister's office on Sunday, shows people awaiting to be rescued via helicopter in Kurram district.

## 147 people evacuated from Kurram by KP govt

### E.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a bit to mitigate the sufferings of the people of district Kurram with regard to transportation due closure of land, the provincial government, kn the special directives of Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur, has launched of a helicopter service to the district.

According to details, on Sunday, the government-operated helicopter provided air transport to a total of 147 individuals, including tribal elders, patients, students, government staff, and other civilians.

In its first flight, on Sunday, the helicopter transported 15 individuals from Peshawar to Parachinar, including jirga members and government officials.

The helicopter made three additional trips between Parachinar and Thall, transporting 87 people from Parachinar to Thall and 15 individuals back to Parachinar. In its final flight on Sunday, 30 individuals were airlifted from Parachinar to Peshawar.

On Saturday, 53 individuals were transported from Parachinar to Peshawar. Over the past two days, a total of 200 people have been airlifted by the provincial government's helicopter service.

Moreover, to address the shortage of medicines in the area, since 4th December, the helicopter has completed seven flights, delivering medical supplies worth over Rs. 60 million to Kurram.

In a statement, Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur said that the provincial government was fully aware of the difficulties faced by Kurram's residents due to road closures adding that the provincial government was utilizing all the available resources to mitigate the suffering of common man there. He further stated that the provincial government was making all out efforts to finding a sustainable solution to the issue of Kurram on permanent basis.

**Arab News adds:** "There is no fare involved in transportation of people or medicines via the helicopter, rather it is a voluntary service by the KP government to meet the emergency situation," Nisar Muhammad Khan, a KP government official, told Arab News.

The helicopter service was also being used to dispatch medicines to Parachinar. A day ago, 53 individuals, including 14 patients, were shifted to Peshawar from Kurram via helicopter, according to the provincial authorities.

A third flight was scheduled to bring people stranded in the Tal area back to Parachinar, while five more flights were expected to relocate over a hundred people on Sunday, according to the provincial government.

Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur's office said the government had so far dispatched 1,850 kilograms of medical supplies to Kurram, assuring that it would mobilize all resources to ease problems of the people and ensure durable peace in the region.

The development comes days after the KP authorities set a deadline of Feb. 1 for warring Sunni and Shia tribes in the district to surrender all weapons and dismantle their bunkers to stem sectarian clashes in the region.

## ECP calls for closing gender gap in electoral rolls

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan celebrated National Working Women's Day by emphasising the importance of addressing the gender gap in electoral rolls, increasing female representation, and fostering a workplace culture of inclusivity and zero discrimination.

Commemorating National Working Women's Day, ECP in a statement reaffirmed its commitment to empowering women in electoral processes and celebrated the vital contributions of Pakistani women in strengthening democracy and promoting political stability.

Women, constituting nearly half of the country's population, are pivotal in achieving lasting peace and prosperity through equal participation in electoral processes. The ECP stated its unwavering commitment to fulfilling its constitutional duty to conduct elections with honesty, fairness, and justice. It also highlighted the significant progress made in

recent years to address the challenges women face as voters and candidates.

The ECP highlighted a significant achievement, stating that the gender gap in electoral rolls has decreased from over 11.7% in 2018 to 7.49% within just five years. The Commission also noted that more women than men were added to the electoral rolls during this period, reflecting increased awareness and participation.

The ECP aims to eliminate this gap in the upcoming elections. To improve women's representation as candidates, the Commission emphasized the need for a critical legal reform requiring political parties to allocate 5% of their tickets to women. However, the ECP acknowledged the necessity for further reforms and stricter accountability measures to ensure compliance and increase women's ticket allocation.

The ECP stated that it is committed to promoting inclusivity within its workforce, with a continued focus on increasing

the representation of women as staff and election officers, while ensuring a workplace free from discrimination and harassment.

The ECP takes pride in being one of the first institutions in Pakistan and the Asia region to adopt the country's inaugural "Gender Mainstreaming and Social Inclusion Framework."

The Commission emphasized that this groundbreaking framework offers a strategic vision to empower women, girls, minorities, transgender persons, and persons with disabilities.

Complementing this initiative, the ECP noted that it has introduced Gender Responsive Budget Planning to ensure fair resource allocation.

On National Working Women's Day, the Chief Election Commissioner of Pakistan called on all women, especially young girls, to actively participate in elections as voters and candidates, stressing that their engagement is essential for building a democratic, peaceful, and prosperous Pakistan.

## Murad pays tributes to soldiers martyred in Waziristan

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Sunday paid homage to 16 brave soldiers, who were martyred in South Waziristan.

He said that martyrs were our most valuable assets and the nation will

always remember their sacrifices.

The Chief Minister said that those, who sacrificed their lives for the country's prosperity and bright future will live forever in history.

Murad saluted the bold

determination of the security forces to restore peace;

He said that 8 khawarjis were sent to hell and terrorists will be eradicated very soon.

He further said that the nation were proud of their forces.

## 94 dead so far in Mozambique's cyclone

MAPUTO (Reuters): Mozambique's death toll from Cyclone Chido has risen to 94, news agency AFP said on Sunday, citing the country's disaster management agency.

The cyclone had made landfall in northern Mozambique a week ago and Mozambique's institute for natural disasters on Thursday had given the death toll at 73.

The Indian Ocean archipelago Mayotte bore the brunt of the storm. Officials in Mayotte, which is one of France's poorest overseas territories, have only been able to confirm 35 fatalities from Chido, but some have said they fear thousands could have been killed.

Olamide Harrison, the International Monetary Fund's Mozambique resi-

dent representative, said on Wednesday that the country's 2024 economic growth is likely to be revised down from a previous forecast of 4.3% due to the impact of the cyclone and post-election civil unrest. In October, Daniel Chapo, the candidate of Mozambique's ruling party Frelimo, was declared winner of the presidential election.

## Military installations attacked on May 9 after proper planning: Asif

LONDON (APP): Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Sunday said that military and sensitive installations were attacked after proper planning on May 9.

Addressing at a press conference here, the minister said, the crowd was trained, and strategic locations, including defence installations, were targeted". Such attacks that had never been witnessed even from Indian forces.

He said yesterday sentences to 25 persons involved in May 9 riots were announced after thorough investigation and examining all evidences.

"The faces of those who were sentenced are now visible, and more verdicts will follow," he said.

Khawaja Asif reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to safeguarding its sovereignty and vowed

that now May 9 like incidents would not occurred. No one can challenge the defence of this country," he added.

He said there was dire need of immediate decision into May 9 riots.

Coming hard on Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder, he said that Imran was now seeking power with the support of United States. "Imran Khan wants to return to power riding on America's shoulders. If any foreign hand attempts to support PTI, Pakistan will defend itself," he said.

He went on to say that PTI government was removed through no confidence motion while the government of Nawaz Sharif was toppled through conspiracy.

He said, the PTI's leadership and their families were involved in corruption, which ran into billions.

The minister said that

if anyone other than Nawaz had been in his position, they would have pocketed \$5 billion without considering national interests.

He was reiterating the party's claims that the PML-N president was offered the above mentioned amount by the United States to abandon the nuclear programme.

The minister said that the PTI founder misused funds intended for the Shaukat Khanum hospital by investing them in Muscat and France. "This person [Imran Khan] is dishonest, and his associates should realise this," he added.

He announced that he would release a white paper detailing allegations of corruption against PTI founder, including cases related to the Shaukat Khanum hospital. "I will present these issues on the Assembly floor and in press conferences," he said.

## Ukrainian drones hit a Russian fuel depot for the second time this month

KYIV, Ukraine (AP): Ukrainian drones struck a major Russian fuel depot for the second time in just over a week on Sunday, according to a senior Russian regional official, as part of a "massive" cross-border attack on fuel and energy facilities that Kyiv says supply Moscow's military.

The strikes came days after Russia launched sweeping attacks on Ukraine's already battered energy grid, threatening to plunge thousands of homes into darkness as winter tightens its grip over the region, and as Russia's all-out invasion of its neighbor nears the three-year mark.

A fire broke out at the Stalnoy Kon oil terminal in Russia's southern Oryol region, local Gov. Andrey Klychkov said in a post on the Telegram messaging app, adding Russian forces downed 20 drones targeting "fuel and energy infrastructure" in the province.

Russian independent news outlet Astra shared video of what it said was an explosion at the site, showing a massive orange blaze lighting up the night sky. While the clip could not be independently verified, it was later shared by a Ukrainian security official who described it as footage

from Oryol.

The official, Andriy Kovalenko of the Council of National Security and Defense, claimed the Oryol fuel depot supplies Russian forces fighting in Ukraine and southern Russia, including the Kursk province where Ukrainian troops have dug in following a lightning incursion in August.

According to Klychkov, the Russian local governor, the fire was extinguished hours later and did not cause casualties or "significant" damage.

Ukraine's military previously claimed to have struck the Stalnoy Kon terminal with drones on Dec. 14, causing a "powerful" blaze.

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Sunday vowed retaliation after Ukrainian drones the day before struck residential buildings in the city of Kazan, in the Tatarstan region over 600 miles (1,000 kilometers) from the front line. Speaking to Tatarstan's regional governor, Rustam Minnikhanov, Putin asserted that anyone attacking Russia has to reckon with Moscow inflicting "many times greater damage" in return, but did not elaborate. His remarks were carried by

Russian state news agencies.

Minnikhanov's press service on Saturday said that eight drones attacked Kazan. Local authorities said there were no casualties.

A 30-year-old man died on the spot Sunday in Ukraine's southern Kherson region after a Russian drone dropped explosives nearby, local Gov. Oleksandr Prokudin reported. Hours earlier, Prokudin said that two other civilians died as a result of Russian drone strikes on the province late on Saturday. A man in his late 40s suffered fatal injuries from a drone blast, and a woman was found dead under rubble after another drone slammed into her house.

In the Kharkiv region in the northeast, a Russian drone strike Sunday severely injured a 56-year-old man as he walked down a road in the city of Kupiansk, local Gov. Oleh Syniehubov reported. He said the man would need to have at least one limb amputated as a result, but gave no further detail.

In the Kyiv suburb of Brovary, debris from a Russian drone sparked a fire late on Saturday on the roof of a 25-story tower

block, according to regional Gov. Ruslan Kravchenko. There were no immediate reports of any casualties.

According to Ukraine's Air Force, Russia launched 103 Iranian-made Shahed drones at its neighbor overnight into Sunday. Ukrainian air defense shot down 52 of the drones while another 44 failed to reach their targets, the force said in a statement, in a likely reference to electronic jamming.

Meanwhile, Russia's Defense Ministry said Sunday that its forces had intercepted 42 Ukrainian drones launched overnight at Russian territory. According to the ministry, 20 of those were over the Oryol region, where the local governor said a blaze tore through the oil terminal.

Separately, Russian forces have continued grinding forward in Ukraine's northeast, in addition to eking out gains near the eastern town of Kurakhove. On Sunday, Russia's Defense Ministry reported that its troops had captured two northeastern settlements: Lozova in the Kharkiv region and Krasne in the Luhansk province. There was no immediate confirmation from Kyiv.

## Punjab govt sends essential items to Parachinar

LAHORE (INP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz on Sunday fulfilled her promise to provide medicines to the people of Parachinar.

On the instructions of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, the second consignment of 41 essential items including medicines and essential goods was sent to Parachinar.

Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz ordered necessary steps to provide five more trucks. Maryam Nawaz had directed to send medicines and other essential goods in a cabinet meeting on December 19 after the people of Parachinar contacted her.

Provincial Health Ministers Khawaja Salman Rafique, Khawaja Imran Nazir and Secretary Emergency Services Dr. Rizwan Naseer supervised the process of transferring medicines to Parachinar.

According to the authorities, more medicines are being sent to Parachinar. The essential medicines include 24 items including insulin, dog bite vaccine, other life-saving medicines and essential goods. So far, 12 large consignments of essential medicines have reached Parachinar, while arrangements for the delivery of more medicines have been completed.

On the instructions of Chief Minister Maryam

Nawaz Sharif, an elderly patient from Parachinar was shifted to Islamabad through the Punjab Air Ambulance Service for immediate operation. Zeeshan Haider, the son of the 60-year-old patient from Kurram district, thanked Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif and appreciated the Air Ambulance Service.

Maryam Nawaz said that the people of Kurram are in trouble, this is not politics, it is time for service. She said, "I pray that the situation returns to normal soon and life returns to its normal routine. People of Parachinar are ours, we cannot leave them alone in trouble and

hardship and a mobile health unit will also be sent to Kurram according to the needs of the people."

She said that if necessary, more patients will be shifted from Parachinar to Rawalpindi through the Air Ambulance Service, adding Qauid Nawaz Sharif has specially instructed her to help the people of Parachinar and all possible help will be provided to the brothers and sisters of Parachinar.

The Punjab CM said that the purpose of starting the air ambulance service was to provide timely and quick assistance and helping people in distress is her motto.

Continued from Front Page

In a nearby compound, bodies covered in blankets were laid on the floor.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military, which has confirmed a separate strike further north, on a school in Gaza City.

Bassal said that eight people including four children were killed in the attack on the school, which had been repurposed as a shelter for Palestinians displaced by the war.

The Israeli military said it had carried out a "precise strike" overnight targeting Hamas militants operating there.

Ceasefire talks A military statement said that a Hamas "command and control centre... was embedded inside" the school compound in the city's east, adding that it was

used "to plan and execute terrorist attacks" against Israeli forces.

AFP impages showed the damaged school building where mangled concrete slabs and iron beams lay strewn amid patches of blood.

Contacted by AFP, an Israeli military spokesperson said they were unable to comment on other reported strikes elsewhere in Gaza.

Bassal said in a statement that an overnight strike killed three people in Rafah, in the south.

And a drone strike early on Sunday hit a car in Gaza City, killing four people, the spokesman added.

Hamas and two other Palestinian armed groups said on Saturday in a rare joint statement that an agreement to end the bloodshed was "closer than ever". The groups, which

include Islamic Jihad and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, said that a truce in Gaza and hostage release deal may be within reach, provided Israel does not impose new conditions in negotiations.

Negotiations have faced multiple challenges since a one-week truce in November 2023, with the primary point of contention being the establishment of a lasting ceasefire.

Israeli leaders have repeatedly stated they oppose a full military withdrawal from Gaza. Another unresolved issue is the territory's post-war governance.

Indirect talks between Israel and Hamas, mediated by Qatar, Egypt and the United States, were held last week in Doha, rekindling hope of a potential breakthrough after months of stalling.

'Cruelty'

On Wednesday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said he was "hopeful" for a deal, but avoided making any predictions as to when it would materialise.

The unprecedented Hamas attack last year that sparked the war resulted in the deaths of 1,208 people, most of them civilians, according to an AFP tally based on official Israeli figures.

Militants also took 251 hostages, of whom 96 remain in Gaza, including 34 the Israeli military says are dead.

Israel's retaliatory offensive in Gaza has killed at least 45,227 people, a majority of them civilians, according to figures from the Hamas-run territory's health ministry that the United Nations considers reliable.