

Cop succumbs to injuries
F.P. Report
BANNU: A police official who was injured in a fierce gun battle with militants in Bannu two weeks ago lost the struggle for life at a hospital in Peshawar, said police on Monday. Police said that the body of the martyred cop Amanullah was brought to Bannu and his funeral prayer was offered at the police lines attended among others by DPO, additional DC, other police officials, relatives and elders.

Earthquake jolts KP, AJK
F.P. Report
ISLAMABAD: An earthquake measuring 5.2 on the richter scale jolted parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Azad Jammu and Kashmir, including Peshawar and Muzaffarabad. The National Seismic Monitoring Centre in Islamabad reported that the epicenter was in the border region between Afghanistan and Tajikistan, at a depth of 212 kilometers.



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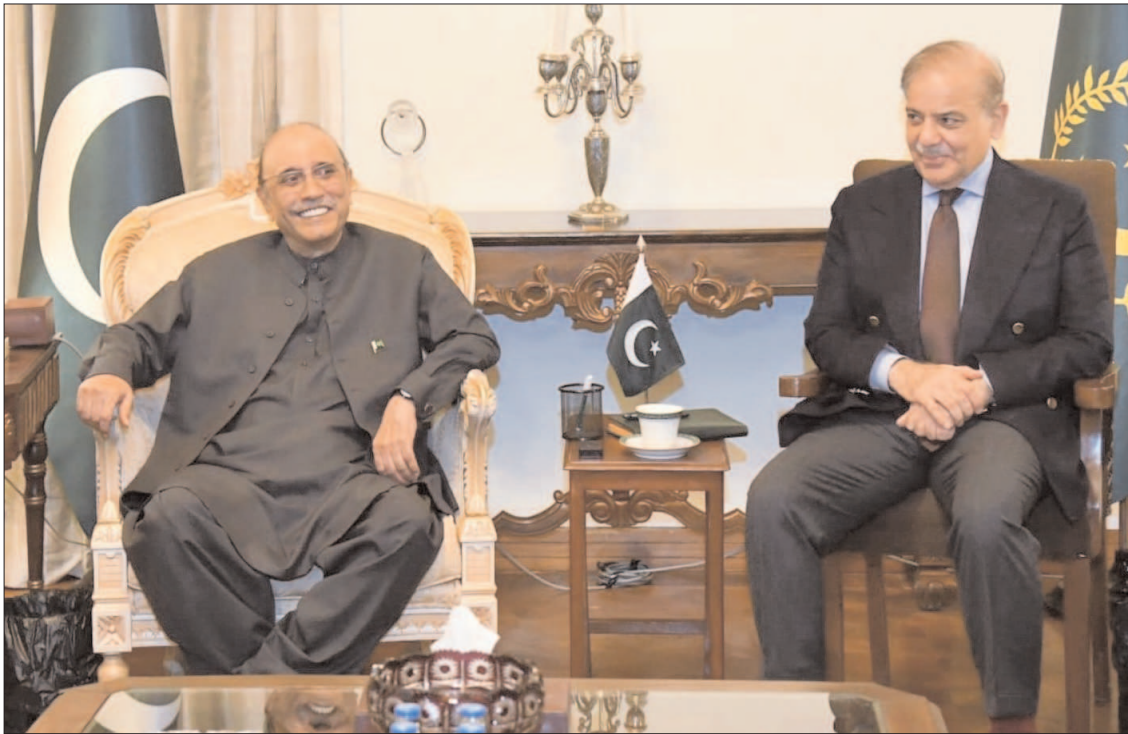
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PESHAWAR EDITION

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif exchanging views with President Asif Ali Zardari.

KP Cabinet approves relief emergency

— declaring Kurram disaster hit district

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The 19th meeting of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cabinet of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was held today under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur. Provincial ministers, Chief Secretary, Additional Chief Secretaries, and administrative secretaries attended the session.

At the outset of the meeting the Cabinet was briefed about the situation in Kurram District and the steps the Government has been taking for restoration of durable peace and provision of essential commodities, treatment and transportation of patients, elderly and/or students.

The Cabinet was informed that several Jirgas have been organized to find a sustainable resolution to the conflict there. Humanitarian measures include the delivery of 10 tons of medicines via helicopter, subsidized wheat supplies, and compensation for affected families have been made. Helicopter services have been initiated to address transportation challenges, transporting 220 people in the last two days. With regard to security and stability measures, a special police force of 399 personnel will be deployed to secure the Parachinar Road. Temporary posts will be established initially, with plans for permanent ones in the future. A new FIA cell will monitor and block social media accounts spreading communal hatred. Illegal weapons must be surrendered by February 1, 2025, and all unauthorized tranches will be demolished. It was informed.

The Chief Minister on this occasion remarked that the conflict in Kurram is a local dispute, not terrorism. Certain elements are fueling unrest through false narratives and communal hatred. He said, the Government remains committed to resolving the issue peacefully through dialogue and Jirgas while ensuring the safety of residents. To address the immediate food requirements of the people there (Kurram district) the Cabinet approved release of

wheat at subsidized rate. As per this approval Finance Department to allocate the subsidy of Rs. 47.110 million against the wheat release of 1,119 MT. The Cabinet also granted ex-post facto approval to the declaration of Emergency in district Kurram under National Disaster Management (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) Act, 2019. This is already in place aimed at enabling the District Administration to effectively address the challenges and undertake necessary relief and rehabilitation measures for the affected population.

As Christmas gift, the Cabinet approved Rs.40 million for around 80 Churches of the Province thus Rs.500,000/- for each with the direction to the Finance Department to release it immediately by today positively. The Provincial Government had already released salaries to its Christian employees in advance it was informed. The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa remains dedicated to ensuring peace, stability, and equal opportunities for all communities. It was reiterated. The cabinet approved the construction of 365 Kilometers Peshawar-D.I. Khan motorways on Public Private Partnership (PPP) basis directing the Finance Department to arrange funds for the land acquisition of the project.

The Cabinet approved Rs. 300 million funds for Medical and Dental College at Pak-Austria Fachhochschule Institute of Applied Sciences and Technology Haripur in two tranches with Rs.150 million this financial year and Rs.150 million next financial year. The fund is aimed at infrastructure development, procurement and faculty recruitment. The Cabinet approved allocation and release of recurring grant for disbursement amongst the Public Sector Universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for payment of regular pension and its liability and salaries.

(Continued on Back Page)

Kabul hails Saudi Arabia's decision to resume activities at Afghanistan embassy

KABUL (AFP): The Afghan foreign ministry on Monday welcomed Saudi Arabia's decision to resume its diplomatic operations in Kabul, more than three years after Riyadh withdrew its staff during the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan.

"We are optimistic about the possibility of strengthening relations and cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan through the resumption of these activities," said Afghan foreign ministry spokesman

Zia Ahmad in a statement. "We will also be able to respond to the problems of Afghans residing in Saudi Arabia."

Riyadh had posted its decision to resume diplomatic operations in Kabul on social media platform X. "Based on the desire of the government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to provide all services to the brotherly Afghan people, it has been decided to resume the activities of the mission of the Kingdom in Kabul starting on

December 22," it said.

Riyadh on August 15, 2021 said it had withdrawn its diplomats from the Afghan capital because of the "unstable situation" created by the Taliban's return to power following the United States' withdrawal from the country. In November 2021, Saudi Arabia said it was resuming consular services in Afghanistan. It also provides humanitarian aid in the country through its KSRelief organization.

President, PM agree on legal reforms

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Monday held a crucial meeting with Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif at Aiwan-e-Sadr on Monday wherein they agreed to move forward with legal reforms and decisions through consultations with all political stakeholders.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Federal Minister for Interior Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi, former prime minister Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, and National Assembly member Syed Naveed Qamar, a President House press release said.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed his best wishes for President Zardari's health during the course of the meeting. The discussion centered around the country's overall political, economic, and security situation. Both leaders reaffirmed their commitment to working together for the nation's development and prosperity. They also discussed in details the legislative matters in Parliament. President Zardari assured Prime Minister Shehbaz of his continued support and cooperation for the progress and stability of the country.

PPP, PML-N likely to reach consensus

F.P. Report

LAHORE: A breakthrough in power-sharing talks between the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) in Punjab appears close, with a key meeting scheduled Monday between President Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz.

According to sources, coordination committees from both parties are set to convene Tuesday at the Governor's House. The PPP will be represented by Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider, Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, Makhdoom Syed Ahmed Mehmood, Nadeem Afzal Chan, Syed Hassan Murtaza, and parliamentary leader Syed Ali Haider Gilani. On the other side, Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, Azam Nazeer Tarar, Rana Sanaullah, Punjab Assembly Speaker Malik Ahmad Khan, and Maryam Aurangzeb are expected to attend the negotiations.

The agenda includes consultations on issues faced by the PPP at the grassroots level in Punjab and discussions to address the party's concerns regarding its relationship with the PML-N in the province. Also, President Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz are scheduled to meet this evening to deliberate on the prevailing political situation.

Earlier this month, PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar had agreed to initiate meetings between their respective committees to resolve unsettled issues.

Govt, PTI agree to continue dialogue

Next meeting of negotiation committee to be held on Jan 2

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: The government and opposition members of the negotiation committee have mutually agreed to hold the next meeting on January 2, marking a continuation of their efforts to address national challenges through dialogue.

In a statement read by Senator Irfan Siddiqui after Monday's sitting, said that the committee members described the discussions as a positive development and expressed hope that the parliament, as the supreme forum, would play a pivotal role in resolving national issues.

They stressed the importance of continuing the negotiation process in the country's best interest. During the meeting, opposition committee members presented a preliminary outline of their demands. It was agreed that these demands would be submitted in written form to enable further progress in negotiations based on the document.

The session also included prayers (Fateha) for the martyrs who sacrificed their lives in the fight against terrorism. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to standing united with the nation in this struggle. The committees expressed their gratitude to National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq for his initiative in facilitating the discussions.

Addressing the committee, Speaker Ayaz Sadiq commended both sides for forming committees to tackle the country's pressing challenges. He said that the initiative followed a recommendation to the prime minister on the request of Ali Gohar.

"I am grateful to all of you for promptly forming these committees. The seriousness of this negotiation process is evident from the seniority of the leadership present," he added. He noted the constructive atmosphere of the meeting and expressed hope that democracy and political stability in the country would flourish. He added that the opposition would bring a charter of demands to the next meeting, emphasizing that dialogue was the only solution to the country's problems.



Sardar Ayaz Sadiq called for an end to political polarization to foster national improvement. He reiterated that economic prosperity depended on political stability, underscoring the critical role of negotiations in democracy. Earlier, Speaking to reporters, Senator Irfan Siddiqui conveyed optimism about the ongoing negotiations, saying, "We approach these talks with an open mind and high expectations. InshaAllah, we anticipate positive outcomes."

Senator Allama Raja Nasir Abbas also stressed the importance of prioritizing Pakistan's national interests during these discussions. The meeting, chaired by Speaker Ayaz Sadiq, was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, PM's Political Advisor Rana Sanaullah, Senator Irfan Siddiqui, former Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, Naveed Qamar, MQM-P Dr. Farooq Sattar and Minister for privatization Aleem Khan.

Opposition representatives included former National Assembly Speaker Asad Qaiser, Sahibzada Hamid Raza, and Senator Raja Nasir Abbas. Other opposition members, such as Leader of the Opposition Omar Ayub, PTI General Secretary Salman Akram Raja, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, and senior PTI leader Hamid Khan, were unable to attend the meeting.

Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq also welcomed members of the government and opposition negotiation committee during the inaugural in-camera meeting, calling it a positive step toward fostering democratic harmony.

In a statement, the Speaker emphasized the importance of dialogue in strengthening democratic values. "The negotiation process is the essence of democracy, and bringing the government and opposition together will fortify democratic principles," he remarked. He praised the formation of the negotiation committee, highlighting that cooperation between both sides is essential to address national challenges effectively.

"This country belongs to all of us, and the people have elected us to resolve their issues," Sardar Ayaz Sadiq said. "Parliament, as the representative institution of the people, carries their aspirations. It is our responsibility as public representatives to find solutions to their problems" he added.

The Speaker further stressed the need for cordial relations between the government and opposition, stating that political stability is vital for economic progress. He called on all stakeholders to work collectively in the country's best interest, particularly in light of the current national situation that demands enhanced political harmony. Participants in the meeting included Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, Advisor to the Prime Minister on Political Affairs Rana Sanaullah, and Senator Irfan Siddiqui. Other government members present were former Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, Syed Naveed Qamar, Dr. Farooq Sattar, and Aleem Khan. The opposition was represented by former Speaker Asad Qaiser, Sahibzada Hamid Raza, and Senator Allama Nasir Abbas.

Verdict against Imran, Bushra Bibi postponed

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: An accountability court on Monday postponed the verdict reserved earlier in the £190 million Al-Qadir Trust corruption reference against former prime minister Imran Khan and his spouse Bushra Bibi.

The court had reserved the verdict on December 18, saying that it would be announced on December 23. However, while presiding over the hearing on Monday, Accountability Judge Nasir Javed Rana said, "The verdict will not be announced today; vacations are coming and there is also a course at the high court."

He stated that the new date for the verdict's pronouncement would be issued soon. Imran and Bushra were indicted in the case on February 27, shortly

after the general elections. The case alleges that Imran and Bushra Bibi obtained billions of rupees and land worth hundreds of kanals from Bahria Town Ltd for legalising Rs50 billion that was identified and returned to the country by the UK during the previous PTI government.

In December, the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) had filed a corruption reference against Imran and seven others, including his wife, in connection with the Al-Qadir University. The reference filed by NAB alleged that Imran, who is currently in jail, played a "pivotal role in the illicit transfer of funds meant for the state of Pakistan into an account designated for the payment of land by Bahria Town, Karachi".

It also claimed that

despite being given multiple opportunities to justify and provide information, the accused deliberately, with mala fide intention, refused to give information on one pretext or another. Property tycoon Malik Riaz Hussain and his son Ahmed Ali Riaz, Mirza Shehzad Akbar, and Zulfi Bukhari are also among the suspects in this reference, but instead of joining the investigation and subsequent court proceedings, they absconded and were subsequently declared proclaimed offenders (PO).

Farhat Shahzadi, a close friend of Imran's spouse, and Ziaul Mustafa Nasim, a legal expert for the PTI government's Assets Recovery Unit, were also declared POs. Subsequently, the properties of all six accused had been frozen.

Senate body discusses UAE visa restrictions

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Senate Standing Committee on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (OPHRD) clarified that the restrictions were not absolute, particularly in Dubai, where skilled labor remains unaffected. He acknowledged a recent decline in the demand for unskilled labor and highlighted the need to prioritize skilled workforce migration.

Senator Zeeshan Khanzada emphasized the urgency of addressing lingering visa concerns, noting public frustration over unresolved issues. "People are questioning when these matters will be resolved," he remarked, urging clarity on the underlying challenges, said a press release.

Khanzada pointed out discrepancies in visa processing despite applicants fulfilling all requirements and stressed the importance of keeping the public informed through compliance updates and

timelines. The Secretary of the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (OPHRD) clarified that the restrictions were not absolute, particularly in Dubai, where skilled labor remains unaffected. He acknowledged a recent decline in the demand for unskilled labor and highlighted the need to prioritize skilled workforce migration. He added that approximately 700,000 workers have been sent abroad this year. Senator Khanzada recommended inviting Overseas Employment Promoters (OEPs) to the next meeting for a detailed review of market demand and data accuracy. On housing projects, the Director General of Housing, Overseas Pakistan Foundation (OPF), reported that the Frontier Works Organization (FWO) has completed 95% of the work on a delayed project, initially set for completion in 2008.

However, he said that litigation and unresolved liabilities have hindered progress. Senator Khanzada urged swift resolution of these issues, suggesting FWO clear its dues and involve IESCO for necessary connections. He emphasized setting a two-month deadline to provide overseas Pakistanis with functional housing. Committee members discussed establishing dedicated immigration counters at international airports for Overseas Pakistanis. Senator Nasir Mehmood underscored the importance of maintaining these counters, especially for departing passengers.

In addressing welfare services, Khanzada highlighted the plight of individuals whose passports had been confiscated, preventing their return to Pakistan. He called for urgent measures to facilitate their repatriation, particularly for those released from jail.

PTI flays trial of civilians in my courts

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: PTI Information Secretary Sheikh Waqas Akram Monday condemned the trial of civilians in the military courts, terming it a violation of international laws.

Talking to the media, Akram stated that all legal options would be pursued to challenge the military trials. He also vowed to thwart the government's alleged conspiracy to ruin the economy.

Referring to the Al-Qadir Trust case, Akram questioned the delay in its judgment. "We want to know why the decision has been postponed. We fail to understand where this judgment is being written. This is a case of acquittal, and there is nothing in it," he declared, describing the £190 million case as a blatant example of political rivalry.

The PTI information secretary accused the government of being willing to override international laws in its pursuit of muting political opponents. "The government has gone to extreme lengths of revenge, aiming to eliminate its rivals," he alleged. Akram further noted that the £190 million case, which he claimed was designed to punish former Prime Minister Imran Khan and his wife, Bushra Bibi, was now being debated internationally as an example of political persecution.

468 people airlifted

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: As many as 468 people were airlifted through helicopters in last three days from Kurram district.

These people were airlifted through KP Govt helicopters service. These people were transported to different areas through M-17 helicopters. It includes patients, students, women and children etc.

Sindh, Punjab collaborate to strengthen social protection initiatives

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh and Punjab on Monday joined hands to enhance social protection programs, aiming to create a unified vision for the welfare of marginalized communities. In a key meeting held here, Special Assistant to Chief Minister Sindh (SACM) on Social Protection, Sarfaraz Rajar and Punjab Social Protection Authority (PSPA) Vice Chairperson Jahan Ara Wattoo discussed strategies to fortify social protection frameworks through mutual collaboration. The meeting focused on sharing best practices and experiences to improve social protection initiatives across both provinces. SACM Sarfaraz Rajar highlighted the Government of Sindh's flagship Mamta Program, which currently supports 1.3 million mothers and children across 15 districts. This collaboration marks a significant step toward creating a more inclusive and equitable future for

communities in Sindh and Punjab, he said. Addressing a joint news conference after the meeting, Mr. Rajar said GoS building on the success of enrolling pregnant mothers under the Mamta Program and it has decided to include lactating mothers as beneficiaries. This expansion aims to scale up and enhance the flagship social protection initiative, ensuring comprehensive care and support for both mothers and their children, Rajar added. Chairperson PSPA Jahan Ara Wattoo praised Sindh's innovative approach to social protection and expressed interest in adopting learnings from the Mamta Program. She emphasized Punjab's commitment to social protection, highlighting nine ongoing initiatives designed to support vulnerable populations in the province. Ms. Jahan Ara Wattoo proposed the establishment of a joint interprovincial platform to foster collaboration and knowledge-sharing between Sindh and

Punjab. "Such a platform would enable both provinces to learn from each other's initiatives, address gaps in social protection programs, and utilize collective wisdom to better serve the downtrodden and marginalized populations across Pakistan," she emphasized. Both leaders reaffirmed their dedication to safeguarding the social protection of marginalized groups through collaborative efforts. The partnership aims to enhance and expand beneficiary outreach, and foster a more robust social protection ecosystem across provinces. The meeting was also attended by Secretary, Social Protection Department, Govt of Sindh, Rafique Mustafa Shaikh, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Sindh Social Protection Authority (SSPA), Samiullah Shaikh, Senior Program Manager, SSPA, Zulfiqar Mithani and senior PSPA officials Mian Muhammad Kashif Saeed, Muhammad Umer Shaikh and Rehana Afzal also joined.

Chinese envoy presents awards to prominent personalities

LAHORE (APP): The Friendship Award Ceremony 2024, organized by the Chinese Consulate in Lahore, was held at a local hotel. Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi, Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis Chaudhry Salik Hussain, and Provincial Minister for Industries and Commerce Chaudhry Shafay Hussain attended the event. Secretary Industry and Commerce Dr. Ehsan Bhutta, Secretary for Transport Ahmad Javed Qazi, Inspector General of Police Dr. Usman Anwar, industrialists, columnists, and senior journalists were also present. Chinese Consul General Zhao Shiren presented Friendship Awards to Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi, Provincial Minister for Industries and Commerce Chaudhry Shafay Hussain, former interim Provincial Minister Aamir Mir, and others. Speaking at the ceremony, Provincial Minister for Industries and Commerce Chaudhry Shafay Hussain said that the decades-old relationship between

Pakistan and China would reach new heights. He highlighted that China has always stood by Pakistan in times of need, and their relationship continues to grow stronger with each passing moment. Chaudhry Shafay Hussain also mentioned that the Chief Minister of Punjab had developed a Garment City in Quaid-e-Azam Business Park, Sheikhpura, which will operate on solar energy. Chinese companies are investing in Punjab in sectors such as solar energy, textiles, agriculture, and lithium battery manufacturing. He stated that an agreement with China's Aiko Solar Energy Company had already been signed to establish a solar panel manufacturing facility in Punjab. Additionally, a leading Chinese mobile phone company will set up a manufacturing plant in Faisalabad. The minister further stated that during his recent visit to China, he held meetings with officials from several companies, including an electric vehicle manufacturing group,

and many showed willingness to invest in various sectors in Punjab. Special Economic Zones in Punjab offer significant incentives for investors. He added that the first phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has been successfully completed, and now the project is entering its second phase, which will be a game-changer. Chinese Consul General Zhao Shiren said that there is strong friendship between China and Pakistan. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is a prime example of friendship and trade cooperation between the two countries. He said the recent visit by a high-level delegation led by the Chief Minister of Punjab has further strengthened bilateral cooperation. The consul general appreciated the establishment of business facilitation centers in Punjab, which provide a one-window facility for investors, and expressed gratitude to the government for ensuring excellent security for Chinese investors.

Speakers call for protecting fundamental freedoms of citizens

KARACHI (PPI): Human, labor, and women rights activists on Monday stressed the need for a unified movement to defend fundamental freedoms of citizens in Pakistan. The discussion took place during a webinar titled "Where Do We Go From Here? A Year of Restricted Civic Freedoms in Pakistan," hosted by The Knowledge Forum in Karachi. Uzma Noorani, a prominent human rights activist, criticized the current political setup for failing to improve civic freedoms, citing ongoing repression of Baloch protesters. She also pointed to the difficulties faced by women's rights groups like the Aurat March. Veteran journalist Iqbal Khattak provided alarming statistics, revealing that 151 journalists were killed between 2000 and 2025, with the media landscape becoming increasingly dangerous for those seeking independence. Khattak acknowledged recent legislative progress aimed at protecting journalists but noted that implementation remains weak, particularly in Sindh, which he described as the most dangerous region for journalists. Mirza Maqsood, a senior trade union leader, addressed the weakening of labor unions, particularly in the banking sector, due to privatization and legal changes. He called for greater unity among trade unions.

Muneeba Rahman Completes PhD



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Scholar Muneeba Rahman has successfully defended her PhD dissertation in Islamic Studies at Qurtuba University of Science and Information Technology, Peshawar. The title of her dissertation is: "Islamic and Western Concepts of Marriage and Their Impact

on Society: A Comparative and Analytical Study." Her supervisor was the distinguished Dr. Ziaullah AlAzhari, while her examiner was Assoc.Prof. Dr. Alam Khan, HOD Seerah Chair Department at Shifa Tameer-e-Millat University. Muneeba attributed her success to the prayers of her parents.

Fire in Van injured 12 people

ISLAMABAD (APP): Twelve people sustained burned injuries in a fire that broke out in a van on Monday near Landhi Bhains Colony, Karachi. Rescue officials said that the vehicle, which had just refueled with gas at a store, was parked when the fire suddenly erupted, reported a private news channel. As a result, all 12 passengers aboard the van suffered burns and were rushed to the hospital for immediate medical treatment. Police said that the injured individuals were returning to Karachi from Tando Muhammad Khan.

Shah assures jobs to local people in Thar

KARACHI (PPI): Sindh Energy Minister Nasir Hussain Shah today took notice of the protest by the local residents of Islamkot in Thar and said that the private companies must prioritize providing employment opportunities to the local population of the desert region. In a statement issued from the Sindh information department, Shah assured that immediate action would be taken to address the demands of the local people. He also stated that additional water filtration plants would be installed to resolve drinking water shortage issue in the area. The energy minister directed private companies to ensure strict compliance with the agreements made with the government, warning that any violation of those agreements will result in action against the responsible companies. He also assured the local residents that no individual from the Thar region would lose their job due to the Thar Coal project, affirming the government's commitment to their welfare and livelihoods.

People of Punjab experiencing real change now

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhari has said that CM Punjab Maryam Nawaz's joy at the scholarship cheque distribution ceremony was truly noticeable. The Punjab government is providing laptops to children instead of petrol bombs, she said and added that under the Maryam Nawaz leadership, the people of Punjab are experiencing a real change. Azma said that there was a past era of turmoil of the "Fitna party" in which children of the nation were urged to "kill, destroy and make petrol bombs." Now, under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif's daughter, we are seeing a new era where children are being given laptops. For the convenience of students, electric bikes are also being provided to them, interest-free loans for businesses, and scholarships are being awarded for children's education, she added. The minister said the vision of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz was to equip children with modern education so they could play a key role in changing the country's future. Our government believes in practical politics and public service, not in propaganda. This is why, in our one-year term, improvements are visible in every sector, she added. The "Fitna group" had left no stone unturned in destroying every institution of Pakistan, she concluded.



ISLAMABAD: Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori addressing a press conference regarding supplies of Medicine in Kurram Agency, MNA Farooq Sattar and others present at Sindh House. —INP Photo

CM launch largest-ever phase-II scholarship program worth Rs4bn

LAHORE (APP): Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif launched Phase-II of the largest scholarship program in the history of Pakistan: Chief Minister Honhar Scholarship Program, under which educational expenses of 30,000 students annually and 120,000 students in next four years will be paid by the Government. She said,"Under this Scholarship Program, talented students can pursue higher education from the best institutions without worrying about their financial situation." She added,"The Punjab government is responsible for paying 100% of the educational expenses of successful students under the Program."

Engineering Science,"Students of 65 universities, 12 medical and dental colleges, and 359 colleges in Punjab are receiving Chief Minister Honhar Scholarships." She said,"Students of 68 subjects/disciplines will be able to meet their educational expenses in the form of scholarships under the Program." She added," Students under the age of 22 with a domicile of Punjab will be eligible for the Honhar Scholarship." She highlighted,"Monthly income of parents of the eligible student should be less than Rs 300,000 per month."

Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif said,"In order to ensure transparency in the Scholarship Program, all applications were received and processed through an online portal." She added,"In addition to the committee of each educational institution, the scrutiny process was also carried out by a provincial-level committee, and the entire process was supervised by a steering committee chaired by the Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb." The Chief Minister highlighted,"The first ceremony of the Honahar Scholarship Program was held at the University of Punjab, in which scholarships were awarded to 2473 students, whereas in the 2nd ceremony held at FAST University Islamabad, scholarships will be distributed among a total of 2570 students of Rawalpindi Division." She said,"Under the Honahar Scholarship Program, 1886 students of UET Lahore were awarded scholarships." She added,"1660 scholarships are for the students of public sector universities, while 637 scholarships are for the students of federal universities, which will be distributed among the students of private sector universities."

HBL

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2	BARA, KHYBER AGENCY Branch Code: 0361 Address: Old Bara Block 6 K. Agency.	RING ROAD BRANCH, PESHAWAR Branch Code: 2362 Address: Shop No. 1, Ground Floor, Subhan Tower, Pishtakhara Chowk, Ring Road, Hayatabad, Peshawar. Contact Number: 091-5230675
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7	DANDAI BAZAR Branch Code: 1918 Address: Khasra No. 1528/1529, Tehsil Alipur, Dandai Bazar, Shangla.	BESHAM Branch Code: 1192 Address: Tehsil Besham, District Shangla. Contact Number: 0996-400313
8	DHERI LIKPANI Branch Code: 1934 Address: Dheri Likpani Branch, Tehsil & District Mardan.	QASAMI Branch Code: 1946 Address: Qasami Branch, Tehsil Takht Bhai, District Mardan. Contact Number: 0937-520059
9	JALALA Branch Code: 1957 Address: Jalala Branch, Tehsil Takht-i-Bahi District Mardan.	TAKHT-I-BAHI Branch Code: 0472 Address: Khata No. 391/706, Khasra No. 4177/897 to 899/1, Opposite Police Station, Main Malakand Road, Tehsil Takht-i-Bahi, District Mardan. Contact Number: 0937-551010
10	SHADI KHAN Branch Code: 1963 Address: Khasra No. 1069/4/7 VPO Shadi Khan Tehsil Hazro, District. Attock.	KAMALPUR MUSA Branch Code: 0365 Address: K. No. 2473/74, Village Kamalpur Musa, Attock. Contact Number: 057-2550169
11	NAR BRANCH, DISTRICT KOTLI AZAD KASHMIR Branch Code: 2352 Address: Khasra No. 42, Khata No. 377/361, Near Jamia Masjid, Nar, Tehsil Charhoi, District Kotli, Azad Kashmir.	RAJDHANI Branch Code: 0642 Address: Khasra No. 1667, P.O. Rajdhani, District Kotli. Contact Number: 05826-401036
12	UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, MAIN CAMPUS, TEHSIL & DISTRICT BANNU Branch Code: 2318 Address: University of Science & Technology, Main Campus, Tehsil & District Bannu.	AZIM KALA ROAD Branch Code: 1991 Address: Village Domail-417, Tehsil & District Bannu. Contact Number: 0928-653397
13	NEW ISLAMABAD AIRPORT Branch Code: 2480 Address: New Islamabad Airport, Admin Block, Islamabad.	TOPCITY ISLAMABAD Branch Code: 2583 Address: Plot No. 3-G, Mentmore Plaza, Ground Floor, Top City-1, Block-A, Rawalpindi Jinnah Avenue, Blue Area, Islamabad. Contact Number: 051-4862529

Kundi emphasizes encouraging youth towards entrepreneurship

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Monday emphasized the importance of guiding and encouraging youth towards entrepreneurship for the development of the province and the country.

He expressed these views during his virtual address as the Chief Guest at the Investor Summit of the year-long Build Entrepreneurship Skills Training (BEST) program, organized by Research Education Development (RED) International.

The event, which saw representatives from Accelerate Prosperity, the U.S. Consulate Peshawar, Arfa Karim Technology Incubator, and Beaconhouse School System (BSS) Peshawar, also featured youth participants from seven districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including Swat, Abbottabad, Peshawar, and Mardan. Four of the best entrepreneurial ideas from these areas were awarded seed grants.

Governor Kundi highlighted the need for the business community of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to support and mentor the province's talented youth.

He commended the successful completion of RED International's initiative to strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Abbottabad, Bannu, Kohat, Mardan, Peshawar, Swabi, and Swat, and congratulated the successful young entrepreneurs, particularly women, urging them to inspire other youth in their communities.



In her address, RED International's Executive Director, Bisma Mirza, and Program Director, Abid Hussain, shared that 350 young individuals directly benefited from the program, with an additional 1,600 benefiting indirectly. Fifty percent of the participants were women, and after a year of training, these young entrepreneurs are now taking practical steps in their ventures.

Governor Kundi further emphasized the need for similar programs through out Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to combat terrorism and provide alternative employment opportunities for the youth.

He expressed his commitment to fostering entrepreneurship and self-reliance as a key strategy for the region's development.

Robert Tate, Public Affairs Officer at the U.S. Consulate Peshawar, conveyed his written message, saying that the U.S. Consulate is dedicated to supporting entrepreneurs in Peshawar by providing resources, guidance, and networking opportunities

to help them thrive, thereby creating job opportunities, enhancing prosperity, and strengthening ties with the United States.

The event also saw congratulatory remarks from Ayaz Khan, Manager at Accelerate Prosperity, Saniya Tahir, and Waleed Paracha from Arfa Karim Technology Incubator.

They praised the participants' success and viewed it as a positive sign for the province's future. The participants also expressed their appreciation for Governor Kundi's efforts in promoting youth engagement and women empowerment in the province.

Meanwhile, Governor Faisal Karim Kundi, has established a joint committee to address the issues faced by the victims of Kurram.

The committee consists of representatives from the overseas Pakistani community, including the Peace Network, and the Red Crescent.

The decision came after an online session organized by Sahar International, Peace Network, and IMI

International, which discussed the current situation in Kurram and the provision of humanitarian aid. Following this session, a special cell was set up at the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Red Crescent office.

The newly formed committee includes members from Sahar International and Peace Network, such as Dr. Ali Raza, Dr. Qamber Jafari, and Dr. Mir Asghar.

The Red Crescent is represented by Vice Chairman Farzand Ali Khan Wazir, Chairman of the Merged Districts Imran Wazir, PSO to the Governor Tanveer Hussain Malik, as well as Saeed Kamal and Syed Ali Hassan from the Red Crescent.

This committee aims to play a crucial role in providing immediate and long-term relief and assistance to the victims of Kurram, ensuring the delivery of essential services to those affected.

The Governor also condemned a hand grenade attack on DPO Office Tank and prayed for the early recovery of the injured police personnel.

The Governor also directed the concerned authorities to present report of the incident.

The Governor also expressed grief and sorrow over the demise of the mother of famous cricketer Shoaib Akhtar and prayed for the departed soul in eternal peace and grant courage to bereaved family members to bear this irreparable loss with fortitude.



PESHAWAR: A man busy in decorating St John Catholic Church in connection with Christmas celebrations. — INP photo

APCEA and Director NCEG hold meeting

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A crucial meeting was held on Monday, between All Pakistan Commercial Exporters Association (APCEA) and Director of the National Centre of Excellence in Geology (NCEG) at NCEG, Peshawar.

Prof. Dr. Liaquat Ali. Syed Minhaj Uddin Shah-Chairman, Gem Export Center, Namak Mandi, Peshawar, Mr. Sartaj Ahmad Khan - Coordinator, APCEA, Mr. Ali Hassan - Consultant, APCEA, Dr. Saad Khan - Assistant Professor, NCEG, Peshawar and Mr. Shakir Ullah - Research Associate, NCEG attended

the meeting.

Both sides focused on strengthening collaboration between NCEG and the All Pakistan Commercial Exporters Association (APCEA).

The meeting discussed NCEG Lab facilities and associated issues, requirements for gemstones and minerals, certification as per international standards and collaboration between NCEG and APCEA.

It was decided in the meeting that a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) will be signed between the two sides, aimed at promoting growth of Pakistan's gemstone and mineral sectors. The MoU will also focus on Joint exhibitions, work-

shops, seminars, and symposia to collaborate with in the gemstones and minerals industries.

It will also assist in capacity-building programs to enhance skills and knowledge in the gemstone and mineral sectors.

The MoU will cover utilization of NCEG's labs for the identification, certification, value addition, and branding of gemstones and minerals.

Maintenance, calibration, and certification of NCEG labs to meet international standards will cover under the MoU.

A facilitation center will be established at Namak Mandi for the collection and identification of gemstones and miner-

als.

The APCEA will provide Support for NCEG staff and students in relevant research activities.

Pursuit of funding opportunities to support this cooperative program.

The collaboration between NCEG and APCEA is poised to significantly enhance the certification and value addition processes for Pakistan's gemstones and minerals, elevating the country's position in international markets.

The meeting concluded with a vote of thanks, acknowledging the commitment of both organizations to the development of the gemstone and mineral sectors in Pakistan

The streets of justice

Syed Adnan

PESHAWAR: The city of Peshawar, bustling with life and activity, had been under the grip of a series of criminal activities ranging from car thefts to street crimes. For months, the residents lived in constant fear, their trust shaken. That was until the officers of the Fagirabad Division Police, under the leadership of SP Fagirabad Division Syed Talal Ahmed Shah, took a firm stand to restore peace and safety to the city.

With a meticulous strategy in place, SP Talal Ahmed Shah directed his team to take swift and decisive action. Leading the charge were SDPO Gulbahar Sajjad Hussain and SDPO Fagirabad Umar Afridi, who, along with their teams, launched a series of operations over the past few days. The operations were spearheaded by the diligent SHOs-Fawad Khan of Gulbahar Police Station, Malang Jan of Fagirabad

Police Station, Javed Marwat of Pahari Pura Police Station, and Tariq Khan of Phando Police Station.

Their efforts bore fruit. In a groundbreaking achievement, the police uncovered seven organized gangs involved in street crimes, robberies, and car and motorcycle thefts. Among the most significant breakthroughs was the solving of a blind murder case. Adil, the perpetrator, confessed to killing Dua Jan, son of Bismillah, in the Phando area over a matter of honor. The murder, which had baffled the authorities for weeks, was finally resolved, bringing relief to the victim's grieving family.

The operations led to the arrest of 26 criminals, many of whom were linked to multiple thefts and robberies across Peshawar. The police recovered seven vehicles, including Toyota Hiluxes and Suzuki Carry vans, along with 20 motorcycles, 30 expensive mobile phones, and cash worth 1.5 million rupees.

Furthermore, weapons seized in the crimes were seized, ensuring that these tools of violence were removed from the streets.

The arrested individuals confessed to their crimes, detailing their involvement in various criminal activities across the city. The recovered items were returned to their rightful owners, a moment of justice and relief for the victims who had lost hope of ever seeing their belongings again.

The success of these operations was a testament to the zero-tolerance policy adopted by the Fagirabad Division Police. SP Talal Ahmed Shah reiterated his commitment to maintaining law and order, ensuring that such efforts would continue relentlessly.

For the people of Peshawar, the actions of their police force were more than just a victory against crime-they were a beacon of hope that justice would prevail and peace would be restored.

Muneeba Rahman completes PhD

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Scholar Muneeba Rahman has successfully defended her PhD dissertation in Islamic Studies at Qurtuba University of Science and Information Technology, Peshawar.

The title of her dissertation is: "Islamic and Western Concepts of Marriage and Their Impact on Society: A Comparative and Analytical Study."

Her supervisor was the distinguished Dr. Ziaullah AlAzhari, while her examiner was Assoc. Prof. Dr. Alam Khan, HOD Seerah Chair Department at Shifa T a m e e r - e - M i l l a t University.

Muneeba attributed her success to the prayers of her parents.

MLT Islamabad students visit Hamza Foundation

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Medical Students (MLT) of Islamabad Medical and dental college visited Hamza Foundation Welfare Thalassemia Center and Blood Transfusion Services Peshawar KP, along with Dr. Usman Waheed, Technical Expert Blood Banking , Health Department Islamabad and Dr. Noor e Saba , Manager Regional Blood Center (RBC) Health Department Peshawar.

Dr. Khalid Khan, Technical Expert Blood Bank , Hamza Foundation briefed in detail about the digital laboratory and Blood bank of Hamza Foundation and gave a detail lecture about cross match of Blood by gel card computerized method. They also gave them detail briefing about different sections of the organization. After the detail visit



Dr. Usman waheed said

"Such a pleasure visiting the Hamza Foundation Thalassemia Centre and Hospital in Peshawar. The Foundation is doing a remarkable job under the able leadership of Ijaz Ali

saheb.

Organizations like Hamza Foundation play a crucial role in providing essential healthcare services and support for poor thalassemics.

The work of dedicated individuals and organiza-

tions in this field is truly invaluable.

On this occasion Engr. Hamza Ejaz and Dr. Khalid Khan presented Hamza Foundation shield to the head of the delegation of the students of Medical and dental college Islamabad.

Quaid-e-Azam Day: An opportunity for Pakistan to reflect

Shayan Hassan Jamy

“WITH faith, discipline, and selfless devotion to duty, there is nothing worthwhile that you cannot achieve”.

These eloquent words stated by Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah embody ideals that are as relevant to Pakistan today as they were at its founding. On his 148th birth anniversary, it is perhaps more pertinent than ever that we reflect on Jinnah's life, career, and legacy.

To say that we must learn lessons from Jinnah's life would be an understatement; we need to comprehensively understand and integrate his principles, ideology, and values within our society. We must strive, both as individuals and as a nation, to fulfil the vision set by our founding father. The vision that has sadly become overshadowed by the challenges of today.

Perhaps the foremost lesson we can learn from Jinnah's life is regarding his immaculate character and strong principles. Throughout his career,

first as a barrister and then as a politician, Jinnah earned the respect of both his allies and opponents for his dedication to justice and the rule of law. His primary aim was to safeguard the rights of all people, particularly minorities; a stance he maintained throughout his life. In his political career, he was one of the leading advocates for Hindu-Muslim unity, at a time when the British were relentlessly trying to divide India into various opposing groups. Although his focus later shifted toward the creation of a separate homeland for Indian Muslims, his core principles of fairness, inclusivity, and justice remained unchanged.

For many Pakistanis today, Jinnah was not simply their founding father, but the embodiment of an entire ideology. It is largely his vision and values that led to the creation of Pakistan, and it is through his guidance that the country navigated its early struggles. Perhaps the greatest insight into Jinnah's ideology is his address to the first

Constituent Assembly of Pakistan.

As the newly independent country's first Governor-General, Jinnah faced nearly insurmountable challenges. The country was still reeling from a violent partition, which saw millions of Indian Muslims killed or displaced.

Despite this, Jinnah remained disciplined and steadfast. His address served as a guiding force for all Pakistanis. He emphasised equality, justice, and religious freedom, encapsulating his vision for a democratic state. Jinnah's vision for Pakistan was that of a progressive nation, where citizens, regardless of their background, could co-exist in harmony.

Another vital lesson we must draw from Jinnah's life is his unwavering commitment to the youth of the nation, particularly regarding their education. Jinnah saw the youth as the nation-builders of tomorrow.

He stated, "They must fully equip themselves by discipline, education, and training for the arduous

task lying ahead of them." His advocacy for education is perhaps what contemporary Pakistan should prioritise the most. As of 2024, there is a major educational crisis within Pakistan, with over 25 million out-of-school children in the country.

Addressing this crisis is imperative, as it is deeply tied to the nation's overall stability and progress. With a majority youth population, Pakistan should focus on their education and employment, ensuring their futures and the future prosperity of the country.

Ultimately, Jinnah's legacy is one of hard work, discipline, and devotion to the creation of Pakistan.

As the visionary leader and founder of Pakistan, a country that was created for the persecuted Muslims of India, Jinnah is one of the greatest nation-builders of modern times. Jinnah's contribution to nation-building goes beyond mere political boundaries. His legacy continues to inspire Pakistanis today, as it reminds us of the importance of integrity, hard

work, and selfless devotion to the common good.

These qualities - faith, discipline, and selfless devotion - are sadly lacking in contemporary Pakistan. Both as individuals and as a nation, we must ensure that Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's legacy continues to live on.

Jinnah's principles, ideology, and values must be emphasised, particularly towards the youth of the country. Given their duty as the nation-builders of tomorrow, as stated by Jinnah, the rights, education and future of the youth must be prioritised. Nationwide policies must be implemented to empower the youth, not only to honour Jinnah's memory but also to create a united Pakistan in line with his ideals.

As we celebrate his birth anniversary, we must re-commit to fulfilling Jinnah's vision of a prosperous nation.

Writer is a Researcher at the Centre for Aerospace and Security Studies (CASS), Lahore. He can be reached at info@casshr.com

Sharafat for coordination for efficient public service

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Member of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly and Chairman of the Standing Committee on Tourism, Culture, Archaeology, and Museums held at the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly in Peshawar. The meeting was attended by the Chief Minister's Advisor on Tourism and Culture, Zahid Chun Zeb, committee members, and MPs including Taj Muhammad Tarend, Nilofer Babar, Ajab Gul Wazir, Samiullah, Zar Alam Khan, Zubair Khan, and Rehana Ismail, as well as senior officials from the

He expressed these views while presiding over a meeting of the Standing Committee on Tourism, Culture, Archaeology, and Museums held at the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly in Peshawar. The meeting was attended by the Chief Minister's Advisor on Tourism and Culture, Zahid Chun Zeb, committee members, and MPs including Taj Muhammad Tarend, Nilofer Babar, Ajab Gul Wazir, Samiullah, Zar Alam Khan, Zubair Khan, and Rehana Ismail, as well as senior officials from the

Departments of Tourism, Culture, Law, and Local Government & Rural Development. On this occasion, Secretary of Tourism and Culture, Dr. Muhammad Bakhtiar Khan, provided a briefing on the ongoing tourism and cultural projects in the province.

During the session, Zahid Chun Zeb highlighted that the River Act implemented in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has been copied from Punjab and that the province lacks its own tailored legislation, which is highly regrettable.



PESHAWAR: Farmers busy in harvesting spinach in their field.



In brief

One killed in Lakki Marwat F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: Unidentified gunmen shot dead a villager in Pinda Michenkhal area of Lakki Marwat district, said police on Monday. Police said that the attackers escaped the crime scene after killing Naeem Shah with a firearm. They said that the murder occurred in the limits of Dadiwala police station of Kurrum Par area. Laiq Shah, brother of the deceased, told police that when he reached the crime scene he found the body of Naeem lying in a pool of blood. He said that his family and slain brother had no enmity with anyone. Police said that the body was shifted to the Tehsil Headquarters Hospital Serai Naurang for post mortem examination and a case had been registered against unknown killer(s) under relevant sections of law.

Traders join hand F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: A grand dinner was given in honor of the office bearers of Sarafa Association by the Patron In-chief of Kamalia Tajir ittehad Chaudhry Kamran Ahmad Nusrat and President Chaudhry Tariq Hassan Rahmani. The elected president of Sarafa Association, Haji Imtiaz Ahmad and CEO Imtiaz Jewelers joined the Kamalia Tajir Ittehad along with his cabinet and the Kamalia Tajir ittehad elected Haji Imtiaz as the Chairman of the Council. Haji Imtiaz is currently the elected president of Sarafa Association after winning the regular elections in Kamalia. Mian Arqam Nasir among the respected members of Mobile Association elected vice president of Kamalia Tajir Ittehad and Ahsan Shafiq was elected as deputy secretary. Patron in-Chief Chaudhry Kamran Ahmad Nusrat administered to the members of Sarafa Association and Chairman Malik Shafiq Shahid administered the oath to the newly elected office bearers. President Kamalia Tajir Ittehad Chaudhry Tariq Hassan Rahmani assured all the members that they are always standing together for the rights of tajers. General Secretary of Kamalia Tajir ittehad Rai Asad Ali Khan, Vice President Fida Hussain Bhatti, Vice Chairman Mian Tahir, Finance Secretary Malik Ajmal, Chaudhry Rehan Dogar and Amjad Chaudhry along with the participation of honorable members of Press Club.

Terrorist ambush condemned F.P. Report

QUETTA: Member Provincial Assembly and Adviser on Industry and Crafts Mir Ali Hassan Zehri expressed deep grief, anger and condolences on the martyrdom of 16 security personnel in the attack on the security check post by terrorists in South Waziristan. In his condemnation statement, he strongly condemned the incident and said that the entire nation is determined to end the scourge of terrorism. Mir Ali Hassan Zehri while saluting the security personnel, who were martyred in the attack, said that the martyrs are the heroes of the nation who sacrificed their lives to destroy the evil intentions of the terrorists. He said that the terrorists involved in the incident will be dealt with iron hands and they will be sent to hell soon and the Pakistani nation, Pakistan Army and other security forces are determined to thwart the cowardly acts of terrorists.



BUNER: KP Minister, Syed Fakhr Jehan inaugurating developmental projects in Daggar.

KP Minister inaugurates Hockey Turf in Buner

F.P. Report

BUNER: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs, Syed Fakhar Jehan on Monday, inaugurated a newly constructed hockey astro turf at the Government Degree College Daggar in Swari, the main commercial center of District Buner. This project is part of the comprehensive development of the hockey ground, with a total estimated cost of 120.8 million rupees.

On this occasion, the Minister also announced the establishment of the Zalmi Foundation Cricket Academy in collaboration with Peshawar Zalmi, which will begin operations next week. Additionally, the establishment of a Youth Center is also being established here while apart from the establishment of an indoor gymnasium here, PC-I has been submitted for the construction of a swimming pool in the same site.

This comprehensive project containing multiple sports facilities, will transform into a sports complex for Buner, located at the intersection of Daggar College and the University of Buner. The inauguration ceremony was attended by Director General Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa,

Abdul Nasir Khan, Deputy Commissioner Buner, Kashif Qayyum, Director Works Sports, Ahmad Zaib Afridi, Head of Marketing Peshawar Zalmi, Ahad Khan, Assistant Commissioner Tehsil Gagra, Noor Nawaz Khan, local representatives, area elders, and party workers.

In his speech, Syed Fakhar Jehan stated that the provincial government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf is committed to providing essential facilities to the public. He emphasized that providing sports facilities is a sign of a healthy society, and the development of sports facilities across the province is part of the government's vision. The Minister further assured that the development projects in Buner will be completed and additional measures will be taken for public service.

He expressed his commitment that the people of Buner, who had given a strong mandate to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, will not be disappointed. Syed Fakhar Jehan also mentioned that the Peshawar Zalmi Cricket Academy will highlight the region's natural talent and provide young people with excellent sports facilities. Meanwhile, the Provincial Minister inspected the sports complex and directed the completion of ongoing

development work at the earliest.

MPA inspects Peer Baba bypass construction works: Former Provincial Minister and Member Provincial Assembly Riaz Khan inspected the construction of the third major bridge at Peer Baba Bypass starting at a cost of Rs21 crores, on Monday.

Tehsil Nazim Sher Alam Khan, PTI Secretary Zia Hussain, SDO Roads and related contractors and local leaders were accompanied him. Riaz Khan told the media that this bypass length two kilometers was started in the previous government at a cost of 21 crores but the PDM government did not provide the funds and it was closed.

Now when the PTI government came again, the work was started again and this is the third big bridge, after its completion, this bypass will be usable for traffic from Bhai Kale Tangai Baba to Narbatul Malikpur.

He added when more funds are available, it will be completed and the work of black top will be done too. On this occasion, Tehsil Nazim Sher Alam Khan said that with the completion of this project, the people of the area will get relief from being stuck in the narrow bazaar of Pacha.

Ex-president Dr. Alvi visits Mardan F.P. Report

MARDAN: Former President of Pakistan Dr. Arif Alvi visited the critically injured worker in Bakri Banda and offered prayer at Ali grave killed during Islamabad protest at D-Chowk, on Monday.

Later, former President Dr. Arif Alvi also went to the room of late Ali and expressed his condolences to his brother. Provincial Minister for Food Zahir Shah Toru DEDAC Chairman MPA Zarshad Khan, Party Regional Secretary Information Engineer Adil Nawaz, and other officials and workers were also present on this occasion. Former President Dr. Arif Alvi said that the martyrdom of Sadar Ali will bring real democracy in the country.

Drug eradication meeting held: A meeting regarding the prevention of drug use and keeping it free from smuggling in Mardan was held at Commissioner Mardan, on Monday. Anti-Narcotics Force Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Regional Police Officer, ADC Planning and Development, ADC&P Swabi and other relevant officials attended the meeting.

ANF officials while giving a detailed briefing on drug trafficking and other issues in the province said that ANF has thwarted drug smuggling attempts by conducting several successful operations with the cooperation of police and law enforcement agencies. Similarly, the role of ANF was highlighted in the awareness campaign regarding the negative effects and harms of drug use.

Commissioner Mardan Javed Marwat emphasized the need for mutual cooperation of ANF, police and law enforcement agencies to prevent poppy cultivation and drug smuggling. He said that due to the efforts of the administration and law enforcement agencies, Pakistan has been free from opium cultivation for a long time and wherever such an effort is made, the agencies immediately take actions. RPO Najeer ur Rahman informed the meeting about the ongoing campaign and successes of the police against drugs in the region.

Art & Science exhibition held F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: In order to promote Technical and Science Education, the Education Department Hafizabad arranged an exhibition at Government High School No. 2, Hafizabad. Deputy Commissioner Abdul Razaq inaugurated the exhibition. Chief Executive Officer Madam Nazia Shahzadi, DEO (Female) Samina Yasmeen, DEO Secondary Muhammad Anwar Javed were also accompanied by him.

A large number of teachers and students also attended the exhibition and students of different schools displayed their science, art, technology models in the exhibition. While witnessing the exhibition, DC Abdul Razaq took keen interest in models of science, art technology and lauded the work of students. He urged the students to focus on their practical study to combat challenges of the present era and they should give attention towards get expertise in computer, science and technology to compete with students at National and International level.

Immunization prevents 3-5m deaths from diseases annually

F.P. Report

QUETTA: 'Vaccines have saved 154 million lives since the EPI began in 1974, of whom 150 million children and 101 million infants. Immunization has been the single greatest contribution of any health intervention in ensuring babies not only see their first birthdays but continue leading healthy lives into adulthood,' said health experts during a health workshop held here in Quetta.

The one-day workshop for journalists across Balochistan entitled 'Engagement, Sensitization, and Orientation Workshop: Strengthening Media Advocacy for Routine Immunization' was organized by the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) in partnership with UNICEF, the World Health Organization, and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. The workshop brought together senior journalists associated with both print and electronic media outlets hailing from the provincial capital Quetta and bordering towns Killla Abdullah, Chaman, Zhob, Killa Saifullah, Noshki, Gwadar, Mastung, Sibi, and Pishin districts.

The Provincial Technical Person N-STOP CDC Dr Ihsan Larek, Deputy Provincial Coordinator EPI Balochistan Dr Sahreen Nowsherwani, Senior Consultant WHO Dr Lubna Khalil, Directive Preventive Director General Health Office Balochistan Dr Asif Shahwani, SBC Lead Balochistan UNICEF Zia ur Rehman Sumalani, Provincial SBC Manager JHPEIGO Nadem Shahid, Provincial SBC Consultant EPI Balochistan Abdul Salam, Provincial MNTE Consultant EPI Balochistan Arif Ullah Marwat and EPI Balochistan official Dr Izzat Mandokhel briefed the participants about the importance of routine immunization, the role of the media, eliminating misconceptions,

and a dozen different types of vaccines.

'Misinformation often drives vaccine hesitancy and puts the lives of thousands of children at risk. The media plays a pivotal role in clarifying scientific facts to parents and community elders with accurate information and evidence,' they urged.

'Vaccination is not only a privilege but also a right of the children that plays a significant role in the prevention of diseases. The parents should cooperate with the immunization teams and get their loved ones vaccinated, because vaccination is the only way to protect children from the diseases', they maintained.

Dr Izzat Mandokhel, on the occasion, highlighted the Immunization Agenda 2030 and said that IA2030 was an ambitious global initiative to improve immunization coverage and reduce vaccine-preventable diseases by the end of the decade, saving 50 million lives globally. The agenda aims to address gaps in vaccination coverage, he said.

The speakers said that immunization currently prevents 3.5 to 5 million deaths annually from various vaccine-preventable diseases. Immunization is critical for children as it protects them from life-threatening diseases. Media persons should highlight the importance of immunization and remove misconceptions about vaccines prevailing in the rural and marginalized communities, they appealed.

'Childhood immunization significantly reduces the risk of contracting diseases, but it has always remained a significant challenge in Balochistan despite hectic efforts. Vaccination rates are often low due to numerous challenges. However, the EPI Balochistan is leaving no stone unturned, and the program targets diseases including polio, measles, tetanus, and hepatitis-B,' the health officials said.

PWDs get winter packages from Zakat Foundation

Haleem Asad

LOWER DIR: The Zakat Foundation of America, a US based Muslim charity organization, in collaboration with the Friends of Paraplegics, distributed a total of 125 winter packages to persons with disabilities across the Lower and Upper Dir districts here on Monday. A total of 60 winter packages were distributed in Upper Dir Upper, followed by another 65 packages distributed in Lower Dir Lower at Shamshi Khan area of Talash.

According to a spokesman of the Zakat Foundation of America, the initiative aimed to provide much-needed relief to individuals and families facing the challenges of harsh winter conditions and poverty. The packages included essential items to help recipients stay warm and secure during the season, he added.

The recipients expressed deep gratitude for this timely support. "This act of kindness has brought us immense comfort during these difficult months. We

are thankful to the Zakat Foundation for their compassion and care", one of recipients told local journalists at Talash.

Speaking about the distribution, a spokesperson for the Zakat Foundation of America said that it was the Foundation's honor to support persons with disabilities in Lower and Upper Dir districts. "By partnering with the Friends of Paraplegics, we are able to ensure that this support reaches those who need it most. Together, we are committed to making a positive impact in their lives", he said. He said the Zakat Foundation of America is an NGO providing emergency relief, post-disaster rehabilitation, sustainable development, education, healthcare and support PWDs.

Art exhibition: A government school, government middle school Sarai Payeen in Talash arranged an art and craft exhibition that attracted a large number of government schools' students to showcase their talent here the other day. The students displayed their drawing reflecting the

present era issues faced by living beings on the walls. The drawings were related to climatic changes and its effects; scarcity of water and its preservation.

The students also displayed their drawings about historic places in Pakistan like Khyber Pass, Minar e Pakistan, Quaid e Azam Tomb and 3D science designs. A 6th grader girl student, Malaika delivered a speech on climate changes, its impacts on human beings and individual responsibilities. She said that government and its agencies should take practical measures to counter the climate changes which were dangerous for the coming generation. Later, a function was addressed by the school's headmaster Burhan ud Din, educationist Principal Ihsan ul Haq, Principal Fazal Wadood, Bahaud Din and others. They lauded the efforts of schools' children and said that such events should be organized in other public sector schools. Shields and cash prizes were distributed among the position holder students on the occasion.

Jinnah's vision: A united Pakistan

Jinshar Ali Bhatti

THE creation of Pakistan is more than a historical milestone- it is the like the dreams that etched in Jinnah's heart. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the father of the nation versioned the dream of unity, justice and equality. He thought of a place where diversity of any kind was not just acknowledged but adopted, where all and sundry could witness safeguard of their rights regardless of religion, caste, or ethnicity. His dream was deeply rooted in Islamic principles and aimed at fostering harmony.

Jinnah's sacrifices are unforgettable. He could have led a comfortable life practicing law in England, yet he chose a path of struggle and sleepless nights. He dedicated his life and every effort to lead the Muslims of the subcontinent toward a dignified, self-respecting, and distinctive identity as Muslims.

But today, as we question how far we have followed Jinnah's vision, how we have achieved it, and how loyal we have been to Jinnah's struggle for a harmonious nation, we have nothing to say apologetically. We are divided on the basis of religion, sectarianism, and self-interests.

Instead of embracing a collective identity as Pakistanis, we often prefer to define by ethnic lines- Punjabi, Sindhi, Pakhtun, Baloch, Kashmiri. This kind of mindset is a clear violation of Jinnah's roadmap given to us.

Jinnah's birthday demands that we rekindle his dream of a united Pakistan. It is time to bring all people together under one mission, one idea, and one promise-Jinnah's Pakistan. This can be achieved through practical steps such as strengthening our national identity through campaigns that highlight unity and cooperation. Grievances of those who feel alienated must be addressed, as their disillusionment and unresolved problems keep them from embracing the cause of national unity.

Inclusive education that instills values of unity and justice is urgently required. The state must prioritize providing higher education in regions where people feel disconnected from the national cause, enabling them to actively contribute to the country's progress and fostering national integration.

Interfaith harmony is a cornerstone of Jinnah's vision. The violence and chaos stemming from religious differences must end. Religious leaders must unite under the Islamic

command: "Hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided." Jinnah envisioned a Pakistan where Muslims, Hindus, Parsis, and others could practice their faith peacefully.

Art and culture can serve as powerful tools to bind people together. The government and civil society should organize cultural festivals that celebrate the traditions of all regions of Pakistan. Such events can teach us that Punjabis, Sindhis, Pashtuns, Baloch, and Kashmiris all stand united under the national flag.

Finally, Jinnah's principles of selflessness must be embodied by everyone without selective application. His philosophy is a remedy for the challenges Pakistan faces today. Jinnah dreamed of a united Pakistan, and his vision can guide us to a brighter future.

Jinnah's vision of united and harmonious Pakistan requires collective effort and dedication. By following his principles of unity, justice and selflessness, we can address the divisions and challenges that hinder the way of united Pakistan. It is time to realize that Jinnah's struggle was for us and we have honor his sacrifices in order to make Pakistan prosperous for future generations.

Nation united against terrorism, says Muqam

F.P. Report

SHANGLA: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and SAFRON and Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ameer Muqam, has stated that terrorists have no religion. He emphasized that targeting innocent people, state officials, and security personnel is tantamount to challenging the writ of the state. He called upon the nation to join the fight against these elements and work for the country's security and survival.

He was addressing an event organized by the

Shangla Qaumi Jirga at the District Bar Association and a ceremony held at the Shangla Police Lines. Ameer Muqam highlighted that the current wave of terrorism poses a significant challenge to the nation, which cannot be tackled by the government alone. He urged the people to stand united against these extremists to ensure they do not achieve their malicious objectives.

He further remarked that whenever the country progresses on the path of development, such elements rise to destabilize peace and prosperity.

Ameer Muqam condemned terrorist activities in Shangla, a district known for its peace, and assured that the people of Shangla will stand firmly with the Pakistan Army, security forces, and the state in these testing times.

Federal Minister paid tribute to the sacrifices of police personnel who lost their lives in the tragic Gunangar incident and other regions of the province, stating that their sacrifices will not go in vain. He assured that police officers will not be intimidated by such acts and pledged to eradicate terrorism.



Putin holds talks with Slovakian PM Fico

MOSCOW (AP): Russian President Vladimir Putin hosted Slovakia's prime minister, Robert Fico, in a rare visit to the Kremlin by an EU leader since Moscow's all-out invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Fico arrived in Russia on a "working visit" and met with Putin one-on-one, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told Russia's RIA news agency. According to Peskov, the talks were expected to focus on "the international situation" and Russian natural gas deliveries.

Russian natural gas still flows to some European countries, including Slovakia, through Ukraine under a five-year agreement signed before the war that is due to expire at the end of this year. At a summit in Brussels, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy told EU leaders that Kyiv has no intention of renewing the deal, something Fico insisted will harm his country's interests. Fico said on Facebook after meeting with Putin that he informed European Union leaders about his trip.

He said the talks in Moscow were a reaction to what Zelenskyy told him in Brussels, that he is against any gas transit to Slovakia through Ukraine. Fico also said that Zelenskyy is in favor of sanctions against Russia's nuclear program, which he said was unacceptable and against the interest of his country that relies on nuclear energy. Fico said Putin confirmed to him that Russia is still ready to deliver gas to the West. He said the two also discussed the military situation in Ukraine, chances for a peaceful solution to the war and the bilateral relations between their two countries which Fico said they will seek to "standardize."

His trip was condemned by the major Slovak opposition parties. Slovakia last month signed a short-term pilot contract to buy natural gas from Azerbaijan, as it prepares for a possible halt to Russian supplies through Ukraine. Earlier this year, it



struck a deal to import US liquefied natural gas through a pipeline from Poland. The country can also receive gas through Austrian, Hungarian and Czech networks, enabling imports from Germany among other potential suppliers.

Visits and phone calls from European leaders to Putin have been rare since Moscow sent troops into Ukraine, although Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orbán visited Russia in July, and Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer met with the Russian leader just weeks into the full-scale war. Both trips drew condemnation from Kyiv and European leaders. Orbán, widely seen as having the warmest relations with Putin among EU leaders, has routinely blocked, delayed or watered down EU efforts to assist Kyiv and impose sanctions on Moscow for its actions in Ukraine. He has long argued for a cessation of hostilities in Ukraine but without outlining what that might mean for the country's territorial integrity or future security.

Fico's views on Russia's war on Ukraine differ sharply from most

other European leaders. The Slovakian PM returned to power last year after his leftist party Smer (Direction) won parliamentary elections on a pro-Russia and anti-American platform. Since then, he has ended his country's military aid for Ukraine, lashed out at EU sanctions on Russia, and vowed to block Ukraine from joining NATO. Fico has also been a rare senior EU politician to appear on Russian state TV following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. In an interview with the Rossiya-1 channel in October, he contended the West has "prolonged the war" by supporting Ukraine, adding that sanctions against Russia were ineffective. He declared that he was ready to negotiate with Putin.

Fico also vowed to attend a military parade in Moscow next May that will mark the 80th anniversary of Nazi Germany's defeat in World War II. The Kremlin has used the annual "Victory Day" celebrations to tout its battlefield prowess, and Putin hailed Russian troops fighting in Ukraine as "heroes" at this year's event.

Zelenskiy says Ukraine's membership of NATO is 'achievable'

KYIV (Reuters): Ukraine's membership of NATO is "achievable", but Kyiv will have to fight to persuade allies to make it happen, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy told Ukrainian diplomats in a speech.

Ukraine has repeatedly urged NATO to invite Kyiv to become a member. The Western military alliance has said Ukraine will join its ranks one day but has not set a date or issued an invitation. Moscow has cited the prospect of Ukraine joining NATO as one of the principal justifications for its 2022 invasion. Kyiv says membership in the Western alliance's mutual defence pact, or an equivalent form of security guarantee, would be crucial to any peace plan to ensure that Russia does not attack again.

"We all understand that Ukraine's invitation to NATO and membership in the alliance can only be a political decision," Zelenskyy told diplomats at a gathering in Kyiv. "Alliance for Ukraine is achievable, but it is achievable only if we fight for this decision at all the necessary levels." Zelenskyy said allies needed to know what Ukraine can bring to NATO and how its membership in the alliance would stabilise global relations. Last week Zelenskyy urged European countries to provide guarantees to protect Ukraine after the war with Russia ends and said Ukraine would ultimately need more protection through membership of the alliance.

Some of the executions were filmed by Russian forces themselves, while others were observed by Ukrainian drones hovering above. The killings captured on such videos usually take place in woods or fields lacking distinctive features, which makes confirming their exact location

Meloni says security threat posed by Russia is far-reaching

SAARISELKA, Finland (Reuters) -Russia poses a bigger threat to European Union security than just defence as Moscow can use illegal immigration and other issues to undermine the bloc, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said.

Finland hosted the leaders of Italy, Sweden and Greece, as well as the EU foreign affairs chief, in its northern Lapland region at the weekend to discuss security in the Nordic region and the Mediterranean, as well as migration challenges in southern Europe. "We have to understand the threat is much wider than we imagine," Meloni, who leads a conservative government, told a press conference when asked about Russia.

The danger to EU security from Russia or from elsewhere would not stop once the Ukraine conflict ended and the EU must be prepared for that, she said. "It's about our democracy, it's about influencing our public opinion, it's about what happens in Africa, it's about raw materials, it's about the instrumentalisation of migration. We need to know it's a very wide idea of security," Meloni said.

She urged the EU to do more to protect its borders and not let Russia or any "criminal organisation" steer the flows of illegal migrants. Some EU members including Finland and Estonia have accused Russia of allowing illegal migrants from the Middle East and elsewhere to enter EU states via Russia without proper checks, undermining the EU's security.

Moscow has denied Russia was deliberately pushing illegal migrants into the EU. Finnish Prime Minister Petteri Orpo said securing his country's 1,340-km (833 mile) border with Russia was "an existential" question for Finland and for other EU members and NATO allies. Meloni said the EU had been wrong in dealing with the issue of immigration over the years simply in terms of how to share the burden.

"Tackling the issue of illegal immigration solely as a solidarity-based debate was a mistake," she said. "The result is that we have been unable to protect our borders ... We want to defend our external borders and we will not allow Russia or criminal organisations to undermine our security."

Russia is executing more, more Ukrainian prisoners of war

MOSCOW (BBC):

Ukrainian sniper Oleksandr Matsievsky was captured by Russians in the first year of the full-scale invasion. Later, a video emerged showing him smoking his last cigarette in a forest, apparently next to a grave he had been forced to dig. "Glory to Ukraine!" he says to his captors. Moments later, shots ring out and he falls dead. His execution is one of many.

In October this year, nine captured Ukrainian soldiers were reportedly shot dead by Russian forces in Kursk region. Ukrainian prosecutors are investigating the case including a photo showing half-naked bodies lying on the ground. This photo was enough for one of the victims, drone operator Ruslan Holubenko, to be identified by his parents. "I recognised him by his underwear," his distraught mother told local broadcaster Suspilne Chernihiv. "I bought it for him before a trip to the sea. I also knew that his shoulder had been shot through. You could see that in the picture."

The list of executions goes on. Ukrainian prosecutors are investigating reports of beheadings and a sword being used to kill a Ukrainian soldier with his hands tied behind his back. In another instance, a video showed 16 Ukrainian soldiers apparently being lined up and then mowed down with automatic gunfire after emerging from a woods to surrender.

Some of the executions were filmed by Russian forces themselves, while others were observed by Ukrainian drones hovering above. The killings captured on such videos usually take place in woods or fields lacking distinctive features, which makes confirming their exact location

difficult. BBC Verify, however, has been able to confirm in several cases - such as one beheading - that the victims wear Ukrainian uniforms and that the videos are recent.

The Ukrainian prosecution service says that at least 147 Ukrainian prisoners of war have been executed by Russian forces since the start of the full-scale invasion, 127 of them this year. "The upward trend is very clear, very obvious," says Yuri Belousov, the head of the War Department at the Ukrainian Prosecutor-General's Office.

"Executions became systemic from November last year and have continued throughout all of this year. Sadly, their number has been particularly on the rise this summer and autumn. This tells us that they are not isolated cases. They are happening across vast areas and they have clear signs of being part of a policy - there is evidence that instructions to this effect are being issued." International humanitarian law - particularly the Third Geneva Convention - offers protection to prisoners of war, and executing them is a war crime.

Despite this, Ramzan Kadyrov, the strongman leader of Russia's Chechnya, briefly ordered his commanders involved in the Ukraine war "to take no prisoners". Rachel Denber, Deputy Director of the Europe and Central Asia Division at Human Rights Watch, says there is no shortage of evidence supporting allegations of Ukrainian prisoners of war being executed by Russian troops. According to her, impunity plays a key part, and the Russian army has some serious questions to answer.

"What instructions do

these units have, either formally or informally from their commanders? Are their commanders being quite clear about what the Geneva Conventions say about the treatment of prisoners of war? What are Russian military commanders telling their units about their conduct? What steps is the chain of command taking to investigate these instances? And if higher ups are not investigating, or not taking steps to prevent that conduct, are they aware that they too are criminally liable and can be held accountable?" she asks. So far, there has been nothing to suggest that Russia is formally investigating claims that its forces have been executing Ukrainian prisoners of war. Even mentioning similar allegations is punishable by lengthy prison sentences in Russia.

According to Vladimir Putin, Russian forces have "always" treated Ukrainian prisoners of war "strictly in line with international legal documents and international conventions". Ukrainian forces have also been accused of executing Russian prisoners of war, but the number of such claims has been much smaller. Yuri Belousov says that the Ukrainian prosecution service treats such accusations "very seriously" and is investigating them - but so far no one has been charged.

According to Human Rights Watch, since the full-scale invasion began in February 2022 the Russian forces have committed "a litany of violations, including those which should be investigated as war crimes or crimes against humanity". The Russian army's record of abuses is such that some Ukrainian soldiers prefer death to capture.

Orbán blames immigration, EU for deadly attack

BUDAPEST, Hungary (AP): Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán drew a direct link between immigration and an attack in Germany where a man drove into a Christmas market teeming with holiday shoppers, killing at least five people and injuring 200 others.

During a rare appearance before independent media in Budapest, Orbán expressed his sympathy to the families of the victims of what he called the "terrorist act" in the city of Magdeburg. But the long-serving Hungarian leader, one of the European Union's most vocal critics, also implied that the 27-nation bloc's migration policies were to blame. German authorities said the suspect, a 50-year-old Saudi doctor, is under investigation. He has lived in Germany since 2006, practicing medicine. Describing himself as a for-

mer Muslim, the suspect shared dozens of tweets and retweets daily focusing on anti-Islam themes, criticizing the religion and congratulating Muslims who left the faith.

Orbán claimed without evidence that such attacks only began to occur in Europe after 2015, when hundreds of thousands of migrants and refugees entered the EU after largely fleeing war and violence in the Middle East and Africa. Europe has in fact seen numerous militant attacks going back decades including train bombings in Madrid, Spain, in 2004 and attacks on central London in 2005.

Still, the nationalist leader declared that "there is no doubt that there is a link" between migration and terrorism, and claimed that the EU leadership "wants Magdeburg to happen to Hungary too."

Orbán's anti-immigrant government has taken a hard line on people entering Hungary since 2015, and has built fences protected by razor wire on Hungary's southern borders with Serbia and Croatia.

In June, the European Court of Justice ordered Hungary to pay a fine of 200 million euros (\$216 million) for persistently breaking the bloc's asylum rules, and an additional 1 million euros per day until it brings its policies into line with EU law. Orbán, a right-wing populist who is consistently at odds with the EU, has earlier vowed that Hungary would not change its migration and asylum policies regardless of any rulings from the EU's top court. He promised that his government will fight back against what he called EU efforts to "impose" immigration policies on Hungary.

SK says it detects signs of NK preparing more troops

SEOUL (Reuters): South Korea's military said on Monday it has detected signs of North Korea preparing to send more troops and weapons, including suicide drones, to Russia to support its war against Ukraine.

Pyeonggang has already provided 240mm multiple rocket launchers and 170mm self-propelled howitzers to Russia, and was seen preparing to produce more suicide drones to be shipped there after leader Kim Jong Un guided a test last month, according to Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). "Suicide drones are one of the tasks that Kim Jong Un has focused on," a JCS official said, adding that the North had expressed its intention to give them to Russia.

Such drones have been widely used in the Ukraine war, and Kim ordered a mass production of the aerial weapons and an update of military theory and education, citing intensifying global competition, state media reported. Seoul, Washington and Kyiv have said there are around 12,000

North Korean troops in Russia. The JCS said at least 1,100 of them had been killed or wounded, in line with last week's briefing by South Korea's spy agency which reported some 100 deaths with another 1,000 wounded in the Kursk region.

Pyeonggang's growing military ties with Moscow could pose greater threats to Seoul as it modernises its conventional forces, which are deemed inferior to the South's, and gains combat experience, the official said. Along the heavily fortified Korean border, the North has dispatched up to 10,000 soldiers to turn the area into a wasteland and install barriers and barbed wire in recent weeks, though the numbers fell to several hundred over the weekend, the JCS said.

The JCS released photos that it said showed a group of North Korean troops testing the electrified wire fence using a goat. There is also a possibility, the JCS said, that the North will test-fire an intermediate-range hypersonic missile around year-end ahead of

US President-elect Donald Trump's inauguration, while sending more garbage balloons to the South.

North Korea has launched thousands of balloons with bags of trash attached to them since late May, saying it was responding to balloons carrying propaganda leaflets flown by South Korean activists. "With the backing of Russia, they'll likely try to stage various strategic provocations next year, such as launching intercontinental ballistic missiles and conducting a nuclear test to enhance its negotiating power with the US," the JCS official said.

On Monday, South Korea's acting president Han Duck-soo had a telephone call with new US Forces Korea commander Xavier T. Brunson. Han emphasised the importance of South Korea and the US jointly maintaining a thorough security posture, as North Korea might "misjudge" Seoul's "serious situation" and commit various provocations such as firing ballistic missiles, Han's office said in a statement.

No room for Kurdish militants in Syria's future: Turkish FM

ANKARA (Reuters): Turkey's foreign minister said after meeting Syria's de facto leader in Damascus that there was no room for Kurdish militants in Syria's future, calling for the YPG militia to disband. Turkey regards the YPG as an extension of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) militants who have fought an insurgency against the Turkish state for 40 years and are deemed terrorists by Ankara, Washington and the European Union.

Visit to Damascus by Hakan Fidan, the first foreign minister to visit Damascus since Bashar al-Assad's overthrow two weeks ago, came amid hostilities in northeast Syria between Turkish-backed Syrian fighters and the YPG, which spearheads the US-allied Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in the northeast. Speaking alongside Syria's de facto leader Ahmed al-Sharaa, Fidan said he had discussed the YPG presence with the

new Syrian administration and believed Damascus would take steps to ensure Syria's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

"In the coming period, the YPG must come to a point where it is no longer a threat to Syria's national unity," Fidan said, adding the YPG should disband. The SDF played a key role defeating Islamic State militants in 2014-2017 with US air support, and still guards Islamic State fighters in prison camps. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken warned that the Islamist group would try to re-establish capabilities in this period.

Fidan said the international community was "turning a blind eye" to the "illegality" of the SDF and YPG's actions in Syria, but added that he believed US President-elect Donald Trump would take a different approach. He said the new Syrian administration had told him during their talks that they could manage

the Islamic State prison camps, if needed.

In a Reuters interview, SDF commander Mazloum Abdi acknowledged the presence of PKK fighters in Syria for the first time, saying they had helped battle Islamic State and would return home if a total ceasefire was agreed with Turkey. He denied any organisational ties with the PKK. The SDF has been on the back foot since Assad's fall, with the threat of advances from Ankara and Turkey-backed groups as it looks to preserve political gains made in the last 13 years, and with Syria's new rulers being friendly to Ankara.

Earlier, Turkey's defence minister said Ankara believed Syria's new leadership, including the Syrian National Army (SNA) armed group which Ankara backs, will drive YPG fighters from all of the territory they occupy in the northeast. Ankara, alongside Syrian allies, has mounted sev-

eral cross-border offensives against the Kurdish faction in northern Syria and controls swathes of Syrian territory along the border, while repeatedly demanding that its NATO ally Washington halt support for the Kurdish fighters.

Ankara had for years backed rebels looking to oust Assad and welcomed the end of his family's brutal five-decade rule after a 13-year civil war. Turkey also hosts millions of Syrian migrants it hopes will start returning home after Assad's fall, and has vowed to help rebuild Syria. Fidan said all international sanctions imposed against Assad must be lifted as soon as possible to help Syria start rebuilding, offering Ankara's assistance on matters such as infrastructure development. Sharaa told press conference his administration would announce the new structure of the defence ministry and military within days.

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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

Trump's way of punishing media critical of him

PRESIDENT-ELECT Donald Trump is adopting a wide-ranging legal strategy in suing media companies over what he describes as false or misleading coverage about him, filing cases under civil anti-fraud laws in addition to defamation lawsuits.

Some legal experts say the cases appear aimed at punishing outlets for critical coverage, and that the novel legal strategies are an effort to get past steep hurdles in defamation lawsuits, which can be difficult for public figures in the US to win. Trump has said the lawsuits, three of which were filed in the past year, are necessary because media companies are "very dishonest" and need to be held accountable.

"President Trump will continue to hold those who have committed, and are committing wrongdoings, accountable for blatantly false and dishonest reporting, which serves no public interest and only seeks to interfere in our elections on behalf of political partisans," Trump spokesperson Steven Cheung said in a statement to Reuters when asked about the president-elect's legal strategy.

Trump has one pending defamation case and is appealing a loss in another. His legal campaign against the media also includes at least two lawsuits brought under unfair trade practices laws and civil anti-fraud statutes aimed at protecting consumers from subpar products. Media advocacy groups said Trump's use of such laws against news outlets could be a way of circumventing legal protections for the press, which can only be held liable for defamation against public figures if they say something they knew or should have known was false. Trump on Monday told reporters he planned to aggressively pursue defamation cases against journalists. He followed through that night by suing the Des Moines Register newspaper in Iowa state court over an opinion poll by the newspaper that showed Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris ahead of Trump before the Nov. 5 election – but not for defamation. He instead brought his case under Iowa's deceptive and unfair trade practices law, which makes it illegal to deceive or mislead consumers in the sale of merchandise, the Reuters report adds.

Trump's lawsuit said millions of Americans "were deceived by the doctored Harris Poll."

The Register acknowledged in a statement that the poll did not reflect Trump's ultimate margin of victory but said it stands by its reporting and believes the lawsuit is meritless.

On Monday, Trump also mentioned his ongoing \$10 billion lawsuit against CBS over the network's October "60 Minutes" interview with Harris, which Trump said was deceptively edited. CBS said in a statement that it did not mislead the public and believes the lawsuit is meritless.

Suing media companies under different laws could avoid some of the obstacles that often doom defamation cases, but it still carries risks, legal experts said.

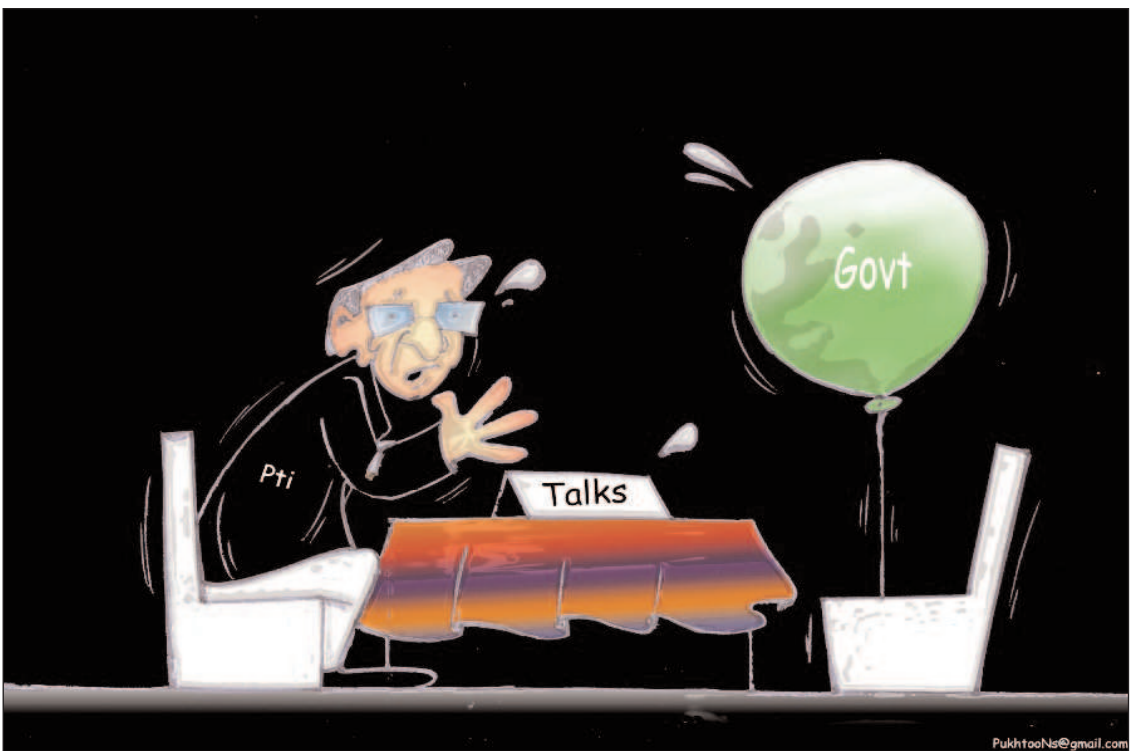
"This is creative lawyering. It doesn't mean that it's easier to win these other kinds of cases," said Ilya Shapiro of the conservative Manhattan Institute. Iowa's consumer protection law, for instance, requires plaintiffs to prove a business knowingly did something deceptive and intended it to influence consumers.

Some legal experts said Trump could have a hard time convincing a judge that news coverage aimed at selling newspapers fits under laws typically wielded against businesses that swindle consumers. In a long line of cases, courts have rejected efforts to bring what are essentially defamation cases under the guise of other laws. Trump's lawsuits could still saddle news outlets with litigation costs and force them to turn over potentially embarrassing internal documents. Some experts said it would be corrosive to press freedoms if judges allow the cases to proceed.

If courts allowed Trump to use consumer protection laws to go after news outlets, for instance, it could open the door for state attorneys general to open official investigations using their broad authority to police the marketplace.

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Quaid's legacy: A testament to true leadership

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

THE making of a true leader is an arduous journey, requiring clarity of thought, unwavering integrity, and unmatched perseverance. In history, there are rare individuals whose words and actions leave no ambiguity about their character and vision. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, later known as Quaid-e-Azam, stands as a shining example of such a leader. His struggle, sacrifices, and principles were not mere rhetoric but a practical demonstration of leadership. Muhammad Ali Jinnah earned the title of "Quaid-e-Azam" not by chance but through years of relentless effort and by proving that he was the only person who could command such respect and trust from his people.

Born on December 25, 1876, in Karachi, Jinnah began his professional journey as a brilliant lawyer. His rise to prominence was not an accident but the result of his commitment to hard work, honesty, and legal acumen. Early in his career, his character was already evident.

He always refused to compromise his professional ethics despite financial pressures. His reputation as an upright lawyer who could not be bought or swayed earned him respect among his peers and society.

Jinnah's transition into politics was driven by his desire to secure justice for Indians under British rule. Even when he joined the Indian National Congress, he was known for his balanced views and statesmanship. His speeches were marked by precision and clarity, leaving no room for ambiguity. Muhammad Ali Jinnah's opposition to ill-considered measures such as the Rowlatt Act of 1919

exemplified his commitment to justice. This act allowed the British to imprison people without trial, and Jinnah stood firmly against it, demonstrating his unyielding resolve to defend fundamental human rights.

However, it was during the 1920s and 30s that Jinnah's character truly shone. Faced with the growing communal divide and the rise of extremist narratives, Jinnah refused to compromise on his principles. His resignation from the Congress after Gandhi's non-cooperation movement underscored his belief in constitutional struggle rather than emotional and violent means. Muhammad Ali Jinnah believed in achieving political goals through legal and democratic avenues, showcasing his deep respect for the rule of law.

By the mid-1930s, Jinnah had emerged as the undisputed leader of the Muslim community. Yet, the title of "Quaid-e-Azam" was not conferred upon him overnight. It was his tireless efforts to secure the rights of Muslims that earned him the respect of millions. The example of the 1940 Lahore Resolution remains a defining moment in this regard. On March 23, 1940, Jinnah addressed the All-India Muslim League at Minto Park, Lahore, presenting the case for a separate homeland for Muslims. His words were clear, his arguments were logical, and his vision was compelling. He articulated the need for Pakistan with such clarity that it left no room for doubt in the minds of his followers. His powerful leadership during this time won him the title of Quaid-e-Azam, meaning the "Great Leader."

Quaid-e-Azam's charac-

ter was tested repeatedly, but he never wavered. A significant historical example was his role in the Cabinet Mission Plan of 1946. Despite immense pressure, Jinnah stayed firm on his demand for Pakistan, knowing it was the only viable solution to safeguard Muslim identity. His calm demeanor and strategic brilliance during negotiations highlighted his qualities as a leader who prioritized the collective good over personal ambition. It was during these years that his followers saw a man of impeccable character, whose words matched his actions.

Another remarkable trait of Jinnah's leadership was his simplicity and modesty. Despite his towering stature, he maintained a lifestyle that reflected humility. In one instance, during the partition in 1947, Jinnah traveled to Karachi on a commercial flight instead of a private one, reflecting his commitment to serving his people rather than indulging in personal luxuries. Even as the Governor-General of Pakistan, Jinnah chose to live in a modest house instead of the grand Governor's residence, underscoring his character and dedication.

Quaid-e-Azam's clarity of words and strength of character were further evident in his address to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan on August 11, 1947.

He stated unequivocally that religion was a personal matter and that every citizen of Pakistan would enjoy freedom and equality. This speech remains one of the most significant documents in Pakistan's history, as it encapsulated his vision for a progressive and inclusive

nation.

Jinnah's final years were marked by ill health, yet his resolve never weakened. In 1948, despite being critically unwell, he continued to work for the nascent state of Pakistan. On July 1, 1948, while inaugurating the State Bank of Pakistan, Jinnah emphasized the need for Pakistan to develop its own economic system based on Islamic principles rather than imitating others. His speech reflected his foresight and his commitment to building a strong and independent nation.

Muhammad Ali Jinnah's life is filled with countless examples of integrity, determination, and selflessness. Whether it was his steadfastness in the face of opposition, his belief in constitutional means, or his unmatched leadership during the struggle for Pakistan, Jinnah proved time and again that he deserved to be called Quaid-e-Azam. His clarity of words and strength of character left no ambiguity about his intentions and values. As his birthday anniversary approaches on December 25, it is imperative to remember and reflect on the principles he upheld. Pakistan was not merely the result of political maneuvering but a testament to the character of a leader who embodied honesty, courage, and vision. It is through such examples that we understand the true essence of leadership.

Today, as we face numerous challenges, the life of Quaid-e-Azam serves as a guiding light. His character reminds us that leadership demands sacrifice, integrity, and unwavering commitment to one's cause. The search for such leaders continues, but Jinnah's legacy remains unparalleled, inspiring generations to come.

Helping Macao go fast-forward

Francisco José Leandro

THE Macao Special Administrative Region is in a fast-forward development mode thanks to the "one country, two systems" policy, a framework that allows the region to be part of the whole and, at the same time, to keep its differences and transform them into advantages.

Bearing in mind the main objective of the central government – to, by 2050, transform China into a great modern socialist country – this political formula has been supplemented with strategic long-term visions. And the rationale of it can be summarized as "One Center, One Platform and One Base". Here, one center stands for the World Centre of Tourism and Leisure; one platform for the China-Portuguese-speaking Countries Commercial and Trade Service Platform; and one base for exchange and cooperation with Chinese culture as its mainstream.

This foundation is associated with three key development drivers: Integration, diversification and a cooperation platform.

The Macao SAR, as a part of China, is fully integrated into the central government's vision. However, the SAR retains its own systems, namely the legal, taxation and economic systems. Furthermore, the SAR is incorporated in the Greater Bay Area, which is equipped with impressive infrastructure (six international airports, seven deep seaports, some of the longest bridges in the world and a state-of-the-art network of interconnected railways) as well as the desire of the central government

to transform it into the world's largest economic bay area.

There are three aspects contributing to this key driver: First, a number of singular characteristics of the SAR such as its international legal personality, the low taxation regime, separate customs territory, the number and quality of its universities, the blended culture and the easy access and the commercial and trade cooperation service platform between China and Portuguese-speaking countries (PSC) and the Belt and Road Initiative; Second, the fact that in 2003, the Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement was signed, which facilitates the commercial and investment flows among the Macao SAR, the Chinese mainland and PSC; and third the new Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, which has been designed to boost the process of Macao's diversification.

This process is being advanced according to the "1 plus 4" formula: "one center" and "four leading industries". More specifically, "one center" for integrated tourism and leisure, while facilitating the development of four nascent industries, namely: first, the "big health" industry – attractive "tourism plus" and delivering high quality health and well-being services, as a result of cooperation between local and overseas medical institutions. The concept also encompasses traditional medicine.

Second, the modern financial services – covering four areas: banking,

insurance, finance, bond market and wealth management, with particular emphasis on setting up a Central Securities Depository. Macao is supposed to embrace an expansion to digital and green operations, e-payments, e-commerce, digital currencies and cryptocurrency, financial market integration, commodities trading services, with more offshore and cross-border business.

Third, the high and new technology – the 10 higher education institutions established in Macao (University of Macau ranks on Times Higher Education University Rankings top 200), side-by-side with four key state laboratories (Quality Research in Chinese Medicine; Analog and Mixed-Signal VLSI; Internet of Things for Smart City; Lunar and Planetary Sciences) and with the support of the Tax Incentive Scheme for Science, Technology and Innovation Business, the Science and Technology Development Fund and the Funding Scheme for Industry-University-Research Partnership for Enterprises, are supposed to operate a real technological transformation.

Fourth, exhibitions and conventions – the Macao SAR has some of the best infrastructures in Asia for large exhibitions and conventions. In 2023, the International Association of Exhibitions and Events granted the Macao Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute the IAEE International Excellence Award. In addition, there is a significant development of e-com-

merce, mobile payments and cross-border e-commerce channels linking Macao with PSC represented by companies in the SAR, and reaching consumers on the mainland. Meanwhile, the Macao Arts Festival, Macao International Music Festival, Art and Cultural Festival between China and PSC are attracting a large number of tourists. The SAR also holds large sports events such as the Grand Prix, Macao International Marathon and WTT Champions Macao.

This last driver is organized as "One Platform and Three Centers (1 plus 3)" – One Platform for China-PSC cooperation composed of three centers, namely a PSC food distribution center, a convention and exhibition center for PSC economic cooperation, and a small and medium-sized enterprises service center for PSC. In the meantime, measures including the building of a China-PSC financial service platform, a RMB clearing center for PSC, a China-PSC cultural exchange center, youth innovation and entrepreneurship exchange center, China-PSC bilingual training base are being gradually implemented.

In 2003, the Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries was established in Macao. Now, the number of parties reaches 10.

The Macao SAR is part of one of the fastest growing regions in the world – the Greater Bay Area. The future of the SAR is moving fast-forward, for the benefit of the unborn generations.

Rebuilding Syria requires much more than bricks and mortar

Tamer Qarmout

REBUILDING Syria after more than a decade of devastating conflict is no simple task. The country's destruction spans physical infrastructure, governance systems, and the very social fabric that once held its people together. While the dream of a prosperous, strong and unified new Syria is certainly achievable after the fall of the al-Assad regime, certain conditions must be met before the country can rise from its ashes.

First, a transitional government whose authority is accepted by all stakeholders must be formed to ensure a smooth transfer to democracy. Any attempt to rebuild can only achieve success if it is guided by an inclusive and stable government that has international recognition and the trust of the Syrian people. A new Syria cannot be built without a new social contract that champions human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Crafting this contract will demand the collective wisdom of Syria's brightest minds and intellectual leaders, as well as the genuine support of the global community. Only a transition steered by Syrians themselves, but fully supported by international institutions through the sharing of expertise and provision of technical support, can ensure successful reconstruction. This endeavour will be challenging, and the path to realising it will likely be fraught with obstacles as the current political landscape remains fragmented, with no clear path to a stable and fully representative government. Without this, however, reconstruction efforts risk becoming another tool for deepening divisions rather than healing them.

Second, the stability of the Syrian state and security of its people must be guaranteed. A country under attack and fraught with conflict cannot be effectively rebuilt. Israel's air attacks on Syrian territory and annexation of more land since the fall of the al-Assad regime have exacerbated instability. Such actions not only devastate infrastructure but also demoralise communities and jeopardise hopes for swift reconstruction and recovery.

As the global community keeps a close eye on Syria's new leadership to ensure a smooth transition, it must also send a clear and forceful message to Israel. This message should strongly condemn Israel's actions and demand their immediate cessation. The international community needs to make it clear that such behaviour is unacceptable and must stop right away. Stability isn't just about the absence of war; it's about creating an environment where people feel safe to rebuild their lives and invest in their future. The last thing Syrians need at this critical stage is a new war front with all the uncertainties and instabilities it will create for the new transitional government.

Third, international sanctions must be lifted to allow the country to get back on its feet. The Caesar Act, especially, which has crippled Syria's economy and made it nearly impossible to bring in foreign investment, must be repealed. These sanctions, which were aimed at pressuring the previous regime to enact human rights reforms and ease repression, have also had a significant effect on the lives of everyday Syrians, deepening their suffering and despair.

The global community may hesitate to fully lift sanctions due to uncertainty about Syria's new leadership. Nevertheless, a more nuanced approach could be adopted. Instead of blanket sanctions, a targeted strategy that involves easing restrictions on Syria's dynamic business community and private sector could be implemented. This would contribute to Syria's long-term stability and speed up reconstruction. Meanwhile, targeted sanctions against specific government officials can be used as a tool to encourage a positive transition, if necessary. This approach balances the need for caution with the imperative of economic revival and reconstruction.

Fourth, civil society must be empowered to play an active role in the reconstruction process. Independent local organisations must be closely involved in all reconstruction efforts, ensuring transparency and accountability. Under the rule of the al-Assad family,

Syria has never had an independent civil society. Years of iron-fisted control have snuffed out community-led initiatives, leaving a society ill-equipped for meaningful public participation. However, during a period of transition and wide-reaching reconstruction, grassroots organisations that advocate for fairness and ensure aid reaches those in need have a crucial role to play. Without them, the rebuilding process risks being tainted by corruption and favouritism. Syria's new rulers must prioritise supporting and strengthening Syrian civil society to ensure a healthy and successful reconstruction. Rebuilding Syria isn't just about politics – it's a complex technical puzzle, too. The country desperately needs people with technical knowledge and experience to be able to make a long-term plan for reconstruction, budget effectively and tackle obstacles that will inevitably emerge in various complex rebuilding projects. But here's the tricky part: Should Syria's new leaders tap into the know-how of officials from the old regime? These officials and civil servants have valuable insider knowledge, but their ties to a government accused of terrible acts could make large segments of the population lose faith in the whole process. Finding the right balance is crucial. The rebuilding effort must be inclusive of all Syrians, and especially those hit hardest by the war – women, children, and minority groups. Alienating any group by giving too much power to people with close ties to the old regime would not just be wrong, but a surefire way to reignite tensions and sabotage any reconstruction effort before it truly begins.

Syria's reconstruction will also be expensive. Who's going to pay for all this? Syria's new leadership cannot do this alone using only what is left in the state's coffers. A coalition of international donors, including UN organisations, would need to provide the country with extensive funds. But they'll open their wallets only if there's a government that people trust. Donors need to know their money won't be wasted or stolen. It's also important to ensure the aid coming into Syria is not scattered or politically motivated. Donors tying aid to their own political demands and priorities would lead only to wasted efforts, gaps in help and more distrust. What's needed is a united approach that would prioritise the real needs of the Syrian people and not allow aid efforts to be shaped by political games. Syria could benefit from hosting a comprehensive reconstruction conference, bringing together international donors and the new Syrian government to align reconstruction priorities, ensure transparent collaboration, and begin rebuilding the nation's infrastructure and social fabric.

Last but not least, education will be crucial in rebuilding Syria into a vibrant, inclusive, prosperous country. A strong education system fosters a society that values human rights, community involvement, and fairness. Only by investing in education and community engagement can Syria heal its social fabric and nurture a generation that chooses dialogue and collaboration over conflict.

The most important aspect of rebuilding Syria will be rebuilding Syrian society. After all, behind all the technical stuff are real people – families who have lost loved ones in arbitrary detention, children who were left without an education, entire communities suffering from trauma. Rebuilding isn't just about fixing roads, houses, schools, and hospitals; it's about giving people back their dignity and hope. Syrians need to feel their suffering wasn't for nothing, that they have a say in the future of their country, and that the days ahead hold more than loss and conflict. Rebuilding Syria will take time and require dedication from all stakeholders. It's not just about construction – it's about rebuilding trust, including everyone in the process, and making sure people are held accountable. The journey ahead is long, but with the right groundwork, there's hope that Syria can once again become a thriving, resilient country. This is a challenge that matters for Syrians and all of us.

US higher education is staring at an uncertain future under Trump

RASHID KHALIDI, America's foremost scholar on Palestine, best described the sorry state of higher education in the United States today in a recent interview.

Explaining his decision to retire from his position as Edward Said chair of modern Arab history at Columbia University, he said, "I didn't want to be a cog in that machine any more."

"For some time now, I have been both disgusted and horrified by the way higher education has developed into a cash register – essentially a money-making, MBA, lawyer-run, hedge fund-cum-real estate operation, with a minor sideline in education, where money has determined everything, where respect for pedagogy is at a minimum".

Regrettably, the situation that pushed Khalidi into what many see as a much too early retirement is likely to get much worse in the near future.

President-elect Donald Trump has promised to launch an all-out attack on American universities as soon as he returns to the White House.

On the campaign trail, Trump cited the rising tuition fees at colleges and universities. But UPenn-educated Trump placed the blame on "radical Left accreditors" who had allowed universities to be "dominated by Marxist Maniacs and lunatics". His running mate, Yale University graduate JD Vance, meanwhile, called university professors the "enemy" and has pledged to "honestly and aggressively attack universities".

The broad strokes of what this presidency plans to achieve in higher education are already laid out in the Heritage Foundation's blueprint for a conservative takeover of the state and all its institutions, Project 2025. The project calls for the dismantling of all diversity, equality and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, and the rejection and removal of "gender ideology" and critical race theory from all teaching material. It underlines the need to prohibit accreditors from requiring educational institutions to adopt DEI policies. It insists on the need to protect faith-based institutions from accreditation agencies' standards and criteria that

they believe "undermine religious beliefs". Project 2025 also calls for an end to loan forgiveness programs and, eventually, the closing of the Department of Education. Trump may not be able to achieve all this during his upcoming term. But some of his stated plans for higher education are well within reach and will likely be implemented in some form or other within the next year.

Trump has promised, for example, to "fire radical left accreditors" and "Marxist diversity, equity, and inclusion bureaucrats" and replace them with those committed to upholding a new set of standards, which include "defending the American tradition and Western civilization". While he will likely not be able to

Somdeep Sen

Trump puts it, "pro-Hamas radicals" to make college campuses "safe and patriotic again".

Title IX, the federal law banning sex discrimination in schools, will likely be in the eye of the storm as well. Biden-era expansion of the definition of the scope of sex discrimination to include discrimination based on sexual orientation has irked the conservatives. Therefore, the incoming Trump administration can be expected to remove existing protections for LGBTQ+ students and staff at federally funded colleges. Under Title IX, the Biden administration had also boosted "safeguards for victims of campus sexual assault" by expanding the defini-

unable to afford higher education.

Trump's immigration policies and mass deportation plans will also have an effect on higher education. Currently, there are 408,000 undocumented students in higher education institutions in the US. Many states provide these students access to in-state tuition and state financial aid. Only three states prevent undocumented migrants from accessing public colleges. Under Trump, many more public institutions may feel compelled to – or outright be forced to – do the same. Trump's incoming Education Secretary, former World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) CEO and passionate anti-DEI advocate Linda McMahon, will undoubtedly work

the crisis in the sector, with dwindling public funding, rising student debt and increasing attacks on academic freedom, "will only be intensified" under Trump 2.0. Others, however, appear to perceive the Trump agenda for higher education as the will of the American people, and seem willing to reach a compromise with an administration openly voicing its desire to reshape the entire sector to fall in line with its ideological preferences.

For example, in a statement after the elections defending DEI efforts and academic freedom at US universities, president of Wesleyan University Michael S Roth also suggested that universities "need to be willing to listen" to the point of view of Trump/Vance as millions of Americans had "made their voices heard with their votes [for them]". Meanwhile, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) – one of the seven nonprofit accrediting groups in the US that oversees 170 colleges in Hawaii and California – has already proposed the removal of "diversity, equality and inclusion" from its accreditation standards. PEN America expressed its concerns regarding the timing of this measure, adding that doing so "in the face of an incoming president who has threatened to 'fire the accreditors' ... cannot help but create the perception that WASC is bowing to political pressure".

That certain leaders and institutions of American higher education appear to be bowing to Trump even before he officially moves back into the White House should not surprise anyone. Higher education has always been a tool of American soft power, and its institutions have been eagerly serving the agenda of the state – whatever this agenda may be – since their very inception. Under Trump, America is poised to reposition itself in the world and restructure its internal dynamics.

The incoming administration has made it clear that these grand alterations to "make America great again" will require a complete revamp of the education system. American universities may not have a choice but to accept their fate and adapt.

Syrians uncertain about their future after takeover

Michael Jansen

denying dissident groups services and supplies.

Bashir simply drafted into his cabinet the dozen HTS members of the Idlib "Salvation Government." This prompted protests from the US-allied Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the Southern Operations Room (SOR), a coalition of 25 armed groups from Deraa, Suwayda, Quneitra, and Damascus countryside which were the first to reach the capital. The transitional government is to remain in office until March 1st while the constitution and parliament have been suspended.

Institutional reforms are meant to be initiated during this period, but it is not clear what will happen after the three months are up. To convince uncertain Syrians that Sharaa intends to build an inclusive government rather than make a power grab, HTS will have to share with the Kurds, SOR, Turkish-backed expatriate Syrian National Council

working once again after years of inertia and corruption. While civil servants have returned to their offices and merchants reopened their shops, they remain uncertain over what might happen in coming days. Civilian watch groups have been created to protect their neighbourhoods.

While members of all communities have been told their rights will be respected, many Syrians have doubts. A Damascene Christian friend has said churches in the capital have been told not to ring their bells as this disturbs Muslims. Although there is a Christmas market, there is no large-scale public celebration. This will be confined to churches. Previously, Syrians of all sects had joined in seasonal festivities.

Women, half of the population, are sceptical about assurances despite the HTS declaration that their personal choices will be respected. HTS spokesman Ubaida Arnaout demonstrated the movement's mindset when he said, "The essence of women and their biological and psychological

The US and EU might hesitate to lift sanctions and encourage investment since Sharaa has, so far, not honoured his pledge to promote inclusivity. He appointed as interim prime minister Mohammed al-Bashir who had previously served in that post in the "Salvation Government" in the northwestern Idlib province which has been ruled by HTS since 2017. While Bashir did a reasonable job providing Idlib with power, water, food, fuel, and services, Idlib is not Syria. Furthermore, HTS reigned with an iron fist, detaining, and disappearing opponents and denying dissident groups services and supplies.

(which has little or no support in Syria), influential Syrians remaining in the major cities, and the public.

Meanwhile, HTS and its armed allies must impose law and order. The UN reported that in the wake of the fall of the Assads, "more than one million Syrians were displaced in less than two weeks, while hundreds of civilians, including at least 80 children, have been killed or injured." There are reports of vigilante killings of members of the Assads' Alawite community in Latakia and of ex-officials and army officers elsewhere. Men have been kidnapped from a mixed Christian, Shia, and Alawite town in central Hama province and four corpses were dumped at the side of the road in the nearby countryside. The Washington Post reported. One of the four was a Shia identified by his tattoo. There were killings in Damascus as well, some by pro-Assad thugs of opposition supporters.

The temporary government must get Syria's administration, police force, and essential services

cal nature does not align with all positions." While he gave the example of the post of defence minister as being inappropriate for women, by stating their gender would deny them leadership positions prompted an angry response by Syrians fearing Talibanisation of their multi-communal country.

Hundreds of men and women demonstrated for democracy and women's rights last Thursday in Damascus' central Umayyad Square. Speakers of many persuasions climbed onto a platform and spoke their minds freely. The crowd chanted, "We want a democracy, not a religious state," "Free, civil Syria" and "The Syrian people are one". Some protesters brandished signs declaring, "No free nation without free women." Syrian women have long assumed major roles in the country's politics, commerce, education, and medicine.

Statements on the future relegation of women have also alerted Christians, Kurds, Druze, Alawites and Shias that they could be marginalised by HTS and its militia allies.

Trump bristles at Musk's rocketing profile as Democrats play on the president-elect's vanity

WHETHER Elon Musk is the real "president," merely the "prime minister" or just Donald Trump's multibillionaire enforcer, he's carving out an unprecedented role that could raise conflicts of interest for the new administration.

The dust is still settling following the Tesla and SpaceX pioneer's role last week in sabotaging a year-end House spending package, which was eventually replaced by a smaller stop-gap law to keep the government open until March.

Republican lawmakers on Sunday raced to praise and defend the X owner — perhaps not surprisingly since the richest man in the world has threatened to finance primary challenges to members of Congress who defy Trump's orders.

"Thank God Elon Musk bought Twitter, because that's the only way we'd even know what's in this bill," Tennessee Sen. Bill Hagerty told CNN's Dana Bash on "State of the Union." The comment might seem strange since lawmakers ought not to need a social media network to be able to read a bill before they vote. But Hagerty also revealed Musk's hold on the GOP base when he said that "every one of our offices was inundated with calls from our constituents" after the billionaire's complaints that the bill was full of bloated spending.

Republican Rep. Tony Gonzales of Texas, meanwhile, described the

incoming dynamic in Washington. "We have a president. We have a vice president. We have a speaker. And it feels ... as if Elon Musk is our prime minister," he said on CBS' "Face the Nation."

Democrats are trying to tweak Trump's vanity, mockingly suggesting that even after winning a second term, he is still not as powerful as the South Africa-born tech mogul whom he put in charge of slashing the size of government once the president-elect takes office.

Delaware Sen. Chris Coons conjured up a scenario on "State of the Union" of Musk doubling the chaos that characterized Trump's first term. "This is a predictor of what's likely to happen. We're not just going to have President-elect Trump as a billionaire rage-tweeting at 4 a.m. We're going to have Elon Musk also injecting instability into how we tackle very complicated and important issues for our country," he said.

Coons' comments came after multiple Democrats spoke of "President Musk" as the country wobbled on the brink of a government shutdown last week.

"On Wednesday morning, Elon Musk proved that he is the real leader of the Republican Party, because over the course of about four or five or six hours, he tweeted nonstop against the deal that had been negotiated and agreed to by all sides," Democratic Rep. Brendan Boyle of

Pennsylvania told CNN's Jessica Dean on Saturday.

The gambit, a welcome opening for a party that struggled to fashion a convincing message in the election and that has been flailing ever since, seems to have worked, as Trump brought up the issue himself Sunday.

"No, he's not taking the presidency," Trump told conservative activists at a Turning Point USA event in Phoenix. The president-elect insisted he liked having smart people around and accused his opponents of launching "a new kick" after he suggested they tried to delegitimize his first term over "Russia, Russia, Russia." Trump added: "No, he's not going to be president, that I can tell you. And I'm safe, you know why? He can't be — he wasn't born in this country."

Trump's comments suggested at the very least that the constant coverage of Musk's role has caught his eye and that he resents the idea that his new best friend is the power behind the throne. They will also stoke fresh speculation over how long the president-elect, who doesn't normally like to share any spotlight, will tolerate Musk's soaring profile — even if both men have huge incentives to continue a friendship that has seen the tech pioneer almost constantly at Trump's side at Mar-a-Lago since the election.

Musk's innovation has revolutionized the e-commerce, electric vehicle and

space industries and is leading the US push to put humans on Mars. He's seen as a hero to many Americans. And his increasingly right-wing, populist political views and capacity to mobilize people behind him since he bought X have made him a talisman for grassroots Trump voters who believe government has failed them.

Technically, there's no doubt who has the most power. Trump will be sworn in as president on January 20 and will command the world's most powerful military and a vast arsenal of nuclear weapons. He will also be bolstered by a Supreme Court ruling arising from one of his legal cases that expanded the scope of executive authority. Musk, the co-chair of Trump's new Department of Government Efficiency or DOGE, likely won't have any real power outside the new president's continued patronage.

Owing to his extraordinary wealth, the megaphone granted by ownership of one of the biggest social media networks, as well as vast international interests, global companies and contacts, Musk is an example of a rare kind of non-state power. He has the capacity to influence governments, elections, economies and even the conduct of wars. He could therefore be an asset to Trump and America if he works in the national inter-

Dr. Azeem Ibrahim

est.

But Musk's presence at the center of the US government also raises the possibility of staggering potential conflicts of interest, especially since his firms benefit from billions of dollars in government contracts. Musk will be in a position to streamline regulations at DOGE to directly benefit his own businesses. And he'll be wielding vast unelected power far beyond the reach of almost every other American after bankrolling Trump's campaign to the tune of tens of millions of dollars.

And perhaps more than any other recent president, Trump seems susceptible to the magnetism of someone as accomplished and charismatic as Musk, and to the status symbol of having the world's richest man as a subordinate in his court. Musk's power was on display last week when he crushed House Speaker Mike Johnson's initial stopgap spending bill by a blizzard of posts on X — which got out ahead of the president-elect, prompting questions about whether he was freelancing.

Trump later caught up by forcefully coming out against the bill himself and demanding the government's borrowing authority be raised before President Joe Biden leaves office. His piling on raised speculation over whether the president-elect was trying to go further than Musk to highlight his own

authority. Regardless, Musk's initial defenestration of the spending bill and the way he immediately was able to exert power over Johnson, who is in the constitutional line of succession behind only the vice president, was extraordinary.

Sen. Markwayne Mullin insisted in an interview with CNN's Kaitlan Collins on Friday that Musk was working closely with the president-elect. "You saw Elon and President Trump working together as a team. I promise you, they were visiting the whole time," the Oklahoma Republican said. "Elon was taking one task that President Trump wanted. And President Trump was taking the other task."

Still, Musk's prominent role might open another line of attack for Democrats — especially if Musk and his DOGE co-chair, Vivek Ramaswamy, a former GOP presidential candidate, start recommending the culling of programs relied on by working Americans, whom Trump vowed during the campaign to help. There is already a thematic disconnect between the president-elect's bond with blue-collar workers and his choice of a Cabinet packed with millionaires and billionaires who are all likely to disproportionately benefit from the huge tax reductions he'll propose next year.

There will also be complications over Musk's role and potential conflicts over

foreign policy. The Tesla owner is active in almost every country in the world and plenty of global hotspots. His Starlink internet service, for instance, is vital to Ukraine's war effort following Russia's illegal invasion over two years ago. Trump has vowed to quickly end the war when he takes office and on Sunday hinted at the possibility of early talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

As Trump manages US relations with other nations, he may come up against a backlash from Musk's attempts to shape politics around the world. His new friend has, for example, criticized the new British government of Labour Party Prime Minister Keir Starmer. And last week he endorsed Germany's far-right party as the country struggles through a political crisis. "Only the AfD can save Germany," Musk wrote on X on Friday. It's one thing for him to express his free speech rights as an individual. But given Musk's proximity to Trump and the quasi-official role he will play in the incoming administration, his comments could cause confusion about US policy and the views of the new president.

Then there is the risk of ethical conflict between Musk's domestic political activity and his international ventures. Last week, Rep. Rosa DeLauro, the top Democrat on the House Appropriations

Committee, wrote a letter to congressional leaders claiming Musk had worked to derail a provision in the original funding bill that would screen investments in China, suggesting he was protecting his Tesla plant in Shanghai. Musk responded to DeLauro's criticism of his role in the government shutdown drama by calling for the Connecticut lawmaker to be expelled from Congress.

Musk's growing prominence is fueling debate over how long Trump will tolerate what often seems to be the brightest star in his orbit. Any schism between the pair could be painful for both since the spaceflight visionary has substantial interest in prolonging his US government contracts. And Trump might worry about fueling a backlash from a friend-turned-foe who controls X.

But former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie — who was once friendly with Trump before being elbowed out of his inner circle — predicted that Musk's status as the president-elect's right-hand man won't last. "When you initially begin in that role, you have enormous influence," Christie said on ABC News' "This Week" on Sunday. "And he loves having you around and he loves listening to you, and you're the best thing in the world. It will always decline. And that's what happens. And you'll see it. It will happen with Elon Musk too."

— CNN



PSX witnesses bullish trend, gains 4,411.27 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bullish trend on Monday, gaining 4,411.27 more points, a positive change of 4.03 percent, closing at 113,924.42 points as compared to 109,513.15 points on the last trading day.

A total of 857,834,976 shares were traded during the day as compared to 754,917,969 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs50.549 billion against Rs39.424 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 463 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 361 of them recorded gains and 62 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 40 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were WorldCall

Telecom with 71,053,052 shares at Rs1.72 per share, Energyco PK with 66,471,663 shares at Rs6.79 per share and Pak Elektron with 38,651,653 shares at Rs40.73 per share. Reliance Cotton Spinning Mills Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs69.00 per share price, closing at Rs759.00, whereas the runner-up was Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited with Rs59.87 rise in its per share price to Rs9,250.00.

Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs299.80 per share closing at Rs21,100.00 followed by Sapphire Textile Mills Limited with Rs46.70 decline to close at Rs1,88.30.

Rupee sheds 15 paise against dollar

Pakistani rupee on Monday depreciated by 15

paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs278.56 against the previous day's closing of Rs278.41.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs278.10 and Rs279.60 respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by 93 paise to close at Rs290.18 against the last day's closing of Rs289.05, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs1.77, whereas a surge of Rs1.83 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs349.92 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs348.09.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and

the Saudi Riyal went up by 04 and 05 paise to close at Rs75.84 and Rs74.12, respectively.

Gold prices remain unchanged at Rs273,400 per tola

The price of 24 karat per tola gold remained unchanged at Rs273,400 on Monday, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold and 10 gram 22 karat gold also witnessed no change and were traded at Rs234,396 and Rs214,863 respectively.

The prices of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs3,350 and Rs2,872.08 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market remained stagnant at \$2,622, the Association reported.

PBA, Ipsos and Reenergiz sign agreement for SEPI's development



F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Pakistan Banks' Association (PBA), in collaboration with Ipsos and Reenergiz, officially signed an agreement today to develop the SME Environment & Performance Index (SEPI). The index will provide valuable insights into the performance and business environment of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Pakistan. This collaboration aims to foster greater financial inclusion, enhance the sustainability of SMEs, and support informed decision-making by policymakers and financial institutions.

The signing ceremony, held at the Islamic Chamber of Commerce & Development Building in Karachi, marks a pivotal moment for SME development in Pakistan as the

country continues to prioritize the growth and financial inclusion of this vital sector.

Commenting on the occasion, Muneer Kamal, CEO & Secretary General-PBA said, "This partnership is a significant step forward in empowering Pakistan's SME sector. The development of the SME Environment & Performance Index will provide us with crucial data to better understand the needs of SMEs, facilitate access to finance, and strengthen the broader business ecosystem. PBA is committed to supporting sustainable SME growth and ensuring that financial products and services are tailored to their evolving needs."

Abdul Sattar Babar, CEO and Managing Director of Ipsos in Pakistan, shared his thoughts on the project's impact, stating,

"At Ipsos, we are excited to be part of this transformative initiative. Through the SEPI, we will provide a data-driven approach to understanding SME performance and the business environment in Pakistan. Our expertise in research and analytics will ensure that the index is both robust and actionable, delivering valuable insights to help stakeholders make informed decisions."

Highlighting the importance of the collaboration, Amer Zafar Durrani, President - Reenergiz said, "Our commitment to sustainable development aligns perfectly with the goals of this initiative, which will not only measure the performance of SMEs but also provide the data needed to drive policy change, foster economic growth, and encourage financial inclusion for all

sectors, including women entrepreneurs."

Syed Irfan Ali, Executive Director at the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), reinforced the central bank's role in supporting SMEs. He said, "The SME sector plays a critical role in Pakistan's economy. The State Bank of Pakistan is fully committed to facilitating the growth of SMEs through financial inclusion initiatives and policy support. This index will be a valuable tool in furthering our efforts in understanding the challenges faced by SMEs and to create targeted solutions to ensure their success and sustainability."

The development of the SME Environment & Performance Index is a crucial step toward creating a more inclusive and supportive financial ecosystem for Pakistan's SMEs. The index will provide data on key performance indicators, sectoral trends, and insights into the challenges SMEs face in the market-place, helping financial institutions, policymakers, and investors make more informed decisions.

The event was attended by key stakeholders from the financial and SME sectors, who gathered to celebrate this milestone in Pakistan's SME development journey.

The signing ceremony was followed by a networking session where participants discussed the next steps in the project's implementation.

Advanced solar technology powers Pakistan's industrial growth

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: As Pakistan's energy needs continue to grow, consumers have lots of choices in cutting-edge technology in advancing industrial and commercial solar solutions.

Known for higher energy yields, performance in low-light conditions, and durability, this advanced photovoltaic technology is becoming the preferred choice for large-scale applications across diverse industries.

A 202kW solar installation at an agribusiness facility in Kasur, completed earlier this year, produces 283,068 kWh annually with a performance ratio of 75%. This project demonstrates how the technology can reliably support energy-intensive operations in agriculture.

The growing adoption of this technology aligns with Pakistan's push for renewable energy solutions to combat high electricity costs. The company's modules, known for reduced

degradation rates and increased longevity, provide businesses with a cost-effective means to offset operational expenses.

It recently announced a breakthrough in its technology with the introduction of i-TOPCON Ultra, achieving a record-breaking efficiency of 26.58% in laboratory conditions. The new modules promise up to 40W additional power output, offering enhanced energy efficiency and cost savings. These advancements are set to fur-

ther boost the performance of Trinasolar's Vertex N series, which already delivers superior results in high-temperature regions like Punjab.

The global photovoltaic market is increasingly recognising this technology as a standard-bearer for efficiency and scalability. Industry projections suggest that the market share for this modules will reach 80% of total shipments next year, with Trinasolar positioned as a leader in this transition.

FGEHA conduct successful auction of commercial properties



F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA) conducted a highly successful auction of commercial properties in Sector 24-B, Scheme 33, Gulzar-e-Hijri, Karachi. The event took place at

Professor Salim-uz-zaman Siddiqui Auditorium, ICCBS, Gate No. 04, Karachi University, Karachi, and witnessed active participation from a large number of investors.

Approximately 40 commercial properties were offered for auction, out of which 21 properties were

successfully sold, generating a record revenue of PKR 600 million - a remarkable achievement in the authority's history. The auctioned properties included 21 commercial shops and 18 commercial plots in Sector 24-B, Scheme 33, Gulzar-e-Hijri, Karachi.

On this occasion, the

Chairman of the Auction Committee expressed appreciation for the renewed investor confidence, terming it a positive development for the organization and the nation's progress. The Auction Committee congratulated all investors and assured them of full cooperation and support.

The Chairman stated that transparent auctions like this contribute to increased commercial and business activities, fostering economic stability.

Investors expressed optimism about future collaborations and strengthening their working relationship with the authority for lucrative investment opportunities. It was further announced that the auction of petrol pump and 19 commercial properties will be held today.



JEDDAH: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan reviewing arrangements on working setup of 'Made in Pakistan' Exhibition in Jeddah.

Banks to remain closed tomorrow

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan and all the banking and financial institutions will remain closed on Wednesday, December 25, 2024 on the occasion of Quaid-e-Azam Day and Christmas.

The State Bank of Pakistan, in a statement issued here on Monday informed, "The State Bank of Pakistan will remain closed on December 25, 2024 (Wednesday) being public holiday on the occasions of Quaid-e-Azam Day and Christmas, as declared by the Government of Pakistan."

Subsequently, all the banks, Micro Finance Banks and Development Finance Institutions will also remain closed to observe the public holiday on December 25, 2024.

Facilitation desk inaugurated

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) has inaugurated a new facilitation centre at the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), aiming to assist the local business community in expanding its operations globally.

This initiative is part of TDAP's ongoing efforts to support businesses in accessing international markets and fostering growth.

The centre was officially opened by TDAP Director General Mohammad Naseer, ICCI President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, and other distinguished former presidents of ICCI, said a press release.

The event gathered key figures to mark the start of this important venture. In his speech, Mohammad Naseer emphasized the federal government's commitment, under the leadership of Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan, to making Pakistan an attractive destination for foreign investors.

He outlined TDAP's central goal of addressing the challenges faced by the business community, particularly in securing access for Pakistani goods to global markets.

He further noted that TDAP plans to conduct and participate in multiple international exhibitions during the fiscal year to achieve this goal.

Additionally, he announced the organization of the Pakistan-ASEAN Trade Development Conference (PATDC) and a Single Country Exhibition in Jakarta, Indonesia, in August 2025, to boost exports and investment in the ASEAN region.

Naseer encouraged the business community to actively participate in these initiatives to maximize their benefits.

He also highlighted that Pakistan's economic challenges can be mitigated through enhanced trade. He stated that the Facilitation Centre will play a key role in connecting entrepreneurs, facilitating product showcases, and promoting awareness and mutual benefits among business partners.

ICCI President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi expressed his appreciation for Trade Development Authority of Pakistan's pivotal role in enhancing Pakistan's trade relations.

Increasing excise on legal tobacco to fuel illicit trade: Amin

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Muhammad Amin Virk, Chairman of Fair Trade in Tobacco, expressed grave concerns during a media talk held in Islamabad about recent reports indicating the government's plans to increase excise taxes on tobacco products. He highlighted that such measures would disproportionately harm tax-paying legal tobacco companies while incentivizing the growth of illicit trade.

"Instead of further burdening the already tax-compliant legal tobacco sector, the government must focus on enforcing the existing tax regime on illicit cigarette manufacturers operating in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Kashmir," said Virk. "These entities control 63% of the market but contributed a meager Rs. 5 billion in taxes during FY2023-24. This blatant tax evasion undermines the national exchequer and incentivizes unlawful activities."

Refuting claims made by foreign-funded local think tanks that increasing excise taxes reduces smoking

rates, Virk stressed the contrary. "Raising taxes on tax-compliant brands does not discourage smoking; it drives consumers toward cheaper, illicitly traded brands that defy all federal and provincial health and commercial laws. These brands are sold below the Minimum Legal Price (MLP) and continue to dominate the market," he emphasized.

Virk revealed shocking figures: "Out of nearly 300 local tobacco brands, only 15 pay taxes and adhere to Track and Trace System (TTS) requirements. The remaining brands, whether smuggled or illicitly produced, flout every local regulation, including taxation, pricing, and public health laws. These entities are bleeding the nation's economy dry."

He appealed to the government to prioritize implementing the current tax regime and ensure equitable taxation. "The solution is not overburdening the tax-paying legal sector but holding tax evaders accountable. Universal enforcement of the TTS and strict regulation can

potentially boost Pakistan's annual tax collection from Rs. 300 billion to Rs. 700 billion," Virk asserted.

Virk also called attention to the importance of the tobacco sector in agriculture. "Tobacco is deeply integrated into Pakistan's agricultural ecosystem, supporting thousands of farmers and workers. The legal tobacco sector paid nearly Rs. 300 billion in taxes last year. Imagine the possibilities if all manufacturers paid their fair share," he concluded.

Virk called for the universal enforcement of the Track and Trace System across all tobacco manufacturers to ensure transparency and accountability. He advocated for a rationalized excise tax policy that promotes equitable implementation across the sector, preventing undue burden on tax-compliant businesses. He highlighted the untapped economic potential of the tobacco industry, stressing that effective regulation and universal taxation could significantly enhance revenue collection without harming the legitimate players in the market.

Fly Jinnah makes Umer's proposal unforgettable

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Fly Jinnah took romance to new heights by facilitating a one-of-a-kind onboard marriage proposal for renowned celebrity Umer Aalam. With the help of the Fly Jinnah team, Umer planned a surprise that left his now-fiancee speechless, making the special moment truly unforgettable.

In light of the ongoing Shaadi season, Umer wanted to create an extraordinary moment for his partner, and Fly Jinnah was proud to make it happen. This heartwarming milestone reflects the airline's dedication to creating experiences that go far beyond



travel, making every journey extraordinary.

Karwan-e-Hayat hosts international conference

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Karwan-e-Hayat, Pakistan's leading institute for mental healthcare, hosted the 2nd International Psychosocial and Psychiatric Rehabilitation Conference (PPRC'24) at a leading hotel in Karachi on December 20-21, 2024. With the theme "Mental Health in the New Millennium," the conference kicked off with a pivotal inaugural session featuring prominent mental health leaders, policy-makers, and thought leaders.

The inaugural session was graced by Dr. Azra Fazal Pechuho, Provincial Minister for Health and Population Welfare, who consented to be the Chief Guest for the event, Prof. Khalid A. Mufti, Patron of the event, and Prof. Dr. Iqbal Afridi, Keynote speaker, all of whom set the tone for two days of groundbreaking discussions in their keynote open-

ing addresses. Esteemed keynote speakers, including Dr. M. Zeshan, delved into critical topics such as empowering parents to tackle digital addiction in kids and teens. Additionally, over the course of the two-day event, there will also be important discussions by Dr. Nasim Chaudhry on affordable and integrated mental health care solutions, Dr. Khalid A. Mufti on the psychiatric history, and Dr. Uzma Ali on substance use prevention strategies for youth.

In alignment with Karwan-e-Hayat's mission to address diverse mental health challenges, PPRC'24 will explore groundbreaking themes. Dr. Qudsia Tariq will lead a critical session on domestic violence awareness, while Dr. Usama Bin Zubair will emphasize broadening perspectives on resistant mental health illnesses. Other topics include innovative

solutions for addressing Alzheimer's, strategies for supporting caregivers, and the challenges of managing ADHD in children, all underscoring the conference's focus on holistic and evidence-based approaches to mental health care.

In his welcome message, Mohammad Salim, Chairman of Karwan-e-Hayat, emphasized the significance of the conference in bringing together experts, researchers, and practitioners from Pakistan, USA, Canada, UK, and other countries. Highlighting the event's focus on rebuilding lives and restoring hope, he stated, "This conference provides a platform to share knowledge, network, and benchmark against the best practices in psychosocial and psychiatric rehabilitation, while advocating for holistic approaches to mental healthcare, evidence-based strategies, and collaborative initiatives."



In brief

Shami ruled out of remaining Australia Tests

NEW DELHI (Agencies): Seamer Mohammed Shami will not be considered for India's fourth and fifth Tests in Australia due to a knee injury, the Indian cricket board (BCCI) said on Monday. The 34-year-old has fully recovered from his heel injury after undergoing surgery in February. He was not picked in the squad but there was a chance he could be added to support pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah. Shami has not played international cricket since the 50-overs World Cup last year but has returned to domestic cricket to prove his fitness. "His left knee has exhibited minor swelling due to increased joint loading from his bowling workload. The swelling is on the expected lines, owing to the increased bowling after a prolonged period," the BCCI said in a statement. "Based on the current medical assessment, the BCCI medical team has determined that his knee requires more time for controlled exposure to bowling loads. Consequently, he has not been deemed fit for consideration for the remaining two Tests of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy." India battled hard to earn a draw in the rain-hit third Test in Brisbane, leaving the five-match series tied at 1-1 heading into the Boxing Day clash.

No deadline on deciding Liverpool future

LONDON (Agencies): Virgil van Dijk says there is "no deadline" regarding his contract situation as the clock ticks down to the end of his Liverpool deal. The Netherlands international's current contract expires at the end of the season and from January 1 he will be able to negotiate with overseas clubs. However, it is understood the 33-year-old's preference is to stay at Anfield. "There is no deadline at all. We will see what the future brings. Is there an update? No," he told reporters. Van Dijk is one of three key players whose deals are entering their final six months, with Trent Alexander-Arnold and Mohamed Salah the others. Salah moved fourth on Liverpool's all-time list of scorers, to 229 goals, after his two strikes in their 6-3 hammering of Tottenham on Sunday. The Egypt international has 18 goals so far this season, including 15 in the Premier League, and also has 15 assists. Salah scored 44 goals in all competitions during his debut season for Liverpool in 2017/18. Van Dijk hopes the 32-year-old forward can go on to have his best campaign for the club, who are four points clear at the top of the Premier League. "The numbers speak for themselves," he said. "He's a very special athlete. He's done amazingly for the club and hopefully he can play his best season ever for the club, stay important with his goals and assists and be clinical."

Sutherland lead Australia to ODI series win

WELLINGTON (Agencies): Ashleigh Gardner continued her batting resurgence with a rapid half-century and Annabel Sutherland produced another superb all-round effort as Australia wrapped up a 2-0 series victory after overwhelming New Zealand in the third ODI at Basin Reserve. In their last match before next month's Ashes, Australia elected to bat and started briskly with an 88-run opening partnership between captain Alyssa Healy and Phoebe Litchfield.

Fakhar Zaman shines as UMT Markhors down Nurpur Lions to reach final

RAWALPINDI (APP): Fakhar Zaman hit a swashbuckling half-century while pacer Akif Javed grabbed three wickets as UMT Markhors beat Nurpur Lions by 29 runs in the Qualifier at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium on Monday.

The victory gives Markhors a place in the final against ABL Stallions on Wednesday.

UMT Markhors were lifted to 180-6 in their 20 overs by a whirlwind 89 off 64 balls by Fakhar Zaman who single-handedly fought after his team was sent into bat. They restricted Nurpur Lions to 151-9 in the allotted 20 overs.

Nurpur Lions were never in the hunt after losing openers Imam-ul-Haq to a run out for one and Omaid Bin Yousuf for two. Hasan Nawaz, who scored a 22-ball 27 with two sixes and a boundary, added 62 for the third wicket with Mohammad Taha who

scored a quick 28-ball 44 with the help of four sixes and a boundary. But the innings fell apart once they departed. Akif Javed finished with 3-22 and Nisar Ahmed 2-19.

Earlier, Afaq Afridi followed his debut hat-trick in the last game against Engro Dolphins by dismissing Khawaja Mohammad Nafay and Mohammad Faizan in the second over of the innings, both without scoring.

It became 3-23 when Afaq had Muhammad Imran caught for one, leaving the UMT Markhors in tatters. Fakhar led the recovery with some lusty hitting, cracking five sixes and nine boundaries. Fakhar added 30 for the fourth wicket with Ifkhar Ahmed who scored 14.

Mohammad Nawaz (ten) helped add another 35 with Fakhar, but the real impetus was given through an 82-run stand for the sixth wicket between

Fakhar and Abdul Samad. Samad cracked two sixes and five boundaries in his 20-ball 41 not out. Afaq finished with 3-29 while left-arm pacer Shahab Khan took 2-36.

The defeat means Nurpur Lions finished the five-team event in third. Lake City Panthers finished fourth and Engro Dolphins fifth and last.

Scores in brief
Qualifier- UMT Markhors beat Nurpur Lions by 29 runs at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium

UMT Markhors 180-6 in 20 overs (Fakhar Zaman 89, Abdul Samad 41; Afaq Afridi 3-29, Shahab Khan 2-36)

Nurpur Lions 151-9 in 20 overs (Mohammad Taha 44, Hasan Nawaz 27, Musa Khan 26 not out; Akif Javed 3-22, Nisar Ahmed 2-19)

Player of the match - Fakhar Zaman (UMT Markhors).



RAWALPINDI: Markhors' batter Fakhar Zaman in full swing during the Bahria Town Pakistan Champions T20 Cup 2024-25 match against the Lions at Pindi Cricket Stadium in twin cities. —APP Photo

Pick order for PSL 10 player draft announced

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Monday unveiled the pick order ahead of the player draft event for the Pakistan Super League (PSL) season 10.

As per the recently-announced pick order, two-time champions Lahore Qalandars will make the first pick in the platinum category, followed by arch-rivals Karachi Kings.

Meanwhile, 2019 champions Quetta Gladiators will make the third pick, while Peshawar Zalmi will have the fourth.

Last season's runners-up Multan Sultans and reigning champions Islamabad United will make the fifth and sixth picks, respectively.

The second round of the Platinum category will follow the reverse sequence, with United making the first pick, followed by Sultans, Zalmi, Gladiators, Kings and Qalandars.

Notably, all six franchises will have a total of three picks each in platinum, diamond and gold categories.

In the diamond category, the Kings will have the first pick in the first round, the Sultans will kick start the second round, while the opening pick in the third round will be made by the defending champions United.

Meanwhile, Zalmi, Gladiators and Sultans will have the first picks in the three rounds of the gold category, respectively.

Furthermore, each team will make five picks in the silver category, two in emerging and four in supplementary category to round off their squad for the upcoming edition of the marquee league, slated to be held in the April-May window next year.

It is pertinent to mention that the highly-anticipated PSL 10 player draft will be held on January 11, 2025 in Gwadar, Balochistan.

Remember, the registration window for the overseas players to offer their availability for the PSL 10, has already been opened, while the process of players' relegations and retentions will run until the end of December.

Naqvi hails Men in Green on historic ODI series win

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Mohsin Naqvi has congratulated Pakistan Men's cricket team on historic white-wash of South Africa in the ODI series.

Pakistan has become the first team to achieve a 3-0 clean sweep against South Africa on their home soil in an ODI series comprising three or more ODIs. Chairman Mohsin Naqvi expressed his heartfelt congratulations to the national team on their remarkable victory in the third ODI.

"This outstanding achievement is a testament to exceptional teamwork and determination," he said.

The Chairman also praised individual performances that contributed to the team's success. "Saim Ayub once again showcased his class with a magnificent century that played a pivotal role in securing the win."

Similarly, Mohammad Rizwan and Babar Azam demonstrated great batting skills, while Sufiyan Moqim's excellent bowling performance won the hearts of the nation," he remarked.

Chairman Mohsin Naqvi further commended the confidence and com-

posure displayed by the players throughout the series. "The team played with passion and hard work, and this historic triumph will undoubtedly boost their morale as they prepare for the ICC Champions Trophy. We are confident that the team will continue to deliver such stellar performances in the upcoming tournaments."

The PCB acknowledges the collective efforts of the players, coaching staff, and management for this remarkable series victory, which has brought pride and joy to cricket fans across the country.

Haugan dazzles in men's World Cup slalom win

ALTA BADIA (AFP): Norway's Timon Haugan produced a dominant performance to win the men's slalom at Alta Badia on Monday, recording his second World Cup victory.

The 27-year-old had posted the fastest time in the first leg and did not disappoint in the second run, beating Loic Meillard of Switzerland by 1.13 seconds. Haugan's compatriot Atle Lie McGrath finished third, 1.26sec adrift of the winner.

"I'm super stoked to have my team-mate on the podium," said Haugan.

"Me and Atle had a talk yesterday, a little bit about the mental stuff with ski racing and it's really cool to see how we both have learned so much the last years and really stepped it up." McGrath was impressed by his compatriot's performance. "What Timon did in that second run was just incredible. He smoked us all which was so much fun," said McGrath.

"Always when a Norwegian wins it's great -- two Norwegians on the podium is also really good. "We are keeping the slalom streak alive of being on the podium every race." France's Clement Noel, winner of the first two slaloms of the campaign, skied as if he is still feeling the right ankle injury that ruled him out of the previous race in Val d'Isere.

The Olympic champion was third after the first leg but dropped to sixth after the two runs. Switzerland's Marco Odermatt does not



compete in the slalom but still tops the overall World Cup standings after an impressive weekend's work, emerging triumphant in both the downhill at Val Gardena and then the giant slalom in Alta Badia on Sunday.

He holds a 71-point lead over Haugan and McGrath's teammate Henrik Kristoffersen, who was fourth in the slalom.

The men stay in Italy for the next round of World Cup races, a downhill and then a super-G in Bormio next Saturday and Sunday.

Australia's Purcell provisionally suspended for doping

SYDNEY (AFP): Two-time Grand Slam doubles champion Max Purcell has taken a voluntary suspension for breaking anti-doping rules, the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) said Monday.

The Australian, who is ranked 12th in the world for doubles, admitted to a breach of the regulations relating to the use of a "prohibited method" and had "requested to enter into a provisional suspension on December 10."

No other details were divulged. "Time served under provisional suspension will be credited against any future sanction," the ITIA said, with the ban coming into effect on December 12.

Under the suspension, the 26-year-old is prohibited from playing in, coaching at, or attending any tennis event authorized by any of the sport's governing bodies or national associations.

It means he will currently not be able to play in the Australian Open at Melbourne Park in January. Purcell won the 2022 Wimbledon doubles title



alongside fellow Australian Matt Ebden and the US Open crown this year, partnered by Jordan Thompson.

Tennis Australia stressed that the breach related to a prohibited method, rather than a prohibited substance.

"The International Tennis Integrity Agency confirmed the breach relates to the use of a prohibited method, rather than the presence of a prohibited substance," it said in a statement carried by Australian media.

"As the matter is currently under investigation, it is inappropriate to comment further at this time."

The ITIA is the same organization that charged

top-ranked Jannik Sinner and world number two Iga Swiatek over breaches of its anti-doping program.

Italy's Sinner was exonerated after twice testing positive for traces of the steroid clostebol in March.

He is currently awaiting the outcome of a World Anti-Doping Agency appeal against the decision.

Swiatek tested positive for a banned heart medication in August.

But the ITIA accepted that the violation was not intentional and the Polish star escaped with a one-month sanction.

Both are expected to play at the Australian Open, which starts on January 12.

West Indies announce Test squad for Pakistan series

ANTIGUA (Agencies): Cricket West Indies (CWI) on Monday revealed a 15-member squad for the upcoming two-match Test series against Pakistan, slated to be played from January 17 to 29, 2025 at the Multan Cricket Stadium.

According to a statement issued by the CWI, the two-match Test series, which marks the final installment of the two-year World Test Championship cycle, will see the West Indies playing a Test series in Pakistan for the first time in 18 years.

The squad marked the return of left-arm spinner Gudakesh Motie, who was unavailable for the team's recently drawn series against Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, emerging left-handed batter Amir Jangoor earned his maiden Test call-up on the back of his match-winning century against Bangladesh on ODI debut earlier this month.

The CWI also confirmed

that Multan will host both Tests of the series, affirming the reports of Karachi being stripped of the hosting of the opener due to the ongoing renovation process at the National Stadium for the ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025.

West Indies head coach Andre Coley termed the upcoming series an opportunity to develop his side in the format.

"For the Test series against Pakistan in January 2025, the focus is on building on what we have done well and transforming the learnings from 2024 into tangible results," he said.

"Motie rejoins the squad to bolster the spin attack, while Jangoor's selection comes on the back of his consistency across formats in regional cricket, as well as his demonstrated high level of competency against spin bowling."

West Indies will embark on their Test tour to

Pakistan with a two-day practice against Pakistan Shaheens, scheduled to be played in Rawalpindi on January 10 and 11.

The visitors are expected to arrive in Islamabad on January 6, and after competing in the practice match, will depart for Multan.

West Indies squad: Kraigg Brathwaite (C), Joshua Da Silva (vc), Alick Athanaze, Keacy Carty, Justin Greaves, Kavem Jangoor, Tevin Imlach, Amir Jangoor, Mikyle Louis, Gudakesh Motie, Anderson Phillip, Kemar Roach, Kevin Sinclair, Jayden Seales, and Jomel Warrican

West Indies Tour of Pakistan
Two-day warm-up Match: January 10 -11, 2025, Rawalpindi
First Test: January 17-21, 2025, Multan Cricket Stadium
Second Test: January 25-29, 2025, Multan Cricket Stadium.

Hockey AstroTurf inaugurated at GDC Dagar

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs, Syed Fakhar Jehan inaugurated a newly constructed hockey AstroTurf at the Government Degree College Dagar in Swari, the main commercial centre of District Buner on Monday.

The project is part of the comprehensive development of the hockey ground, with a total estimated cost of 120.8 million rupees.

On this occasion, the minister also announced the establishment of the Zalmi Foundation Cricket Academy in collaboration with Peshawar Zalmi, which will begin operations next week.

Additionally, the establishment of a Youth Centre is also being established here while apart from the

establishment of an indoor gymnasium here, PC-I has been submitted for the construction of a swimming pool in the same site.

This comprehensive project containing multiple sports facilities, will transform into a sports complex for Buner, located at the intersection of Dagar College and the University of Buner.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by Director General Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Abdul Nasir Khan, Deputy Commissioner Buner, Kashif Qayyum, Director Works Sports, Ahmad Zaib Afridi, Head of Marketing Peshawar Zalmi, Ahad Khan, Assistant Commissioner Tehsil Gagra, Noor Nawaz Khan, local representatives, area elders, and party workers.

In his speech, Syed Fakhar Jehan stated that the provincial government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf is committed to providing essential facilities to the public.

He emphasized that providing sports facilities is a sign of a healthy society, and the development of sports facilities across the province is part of the government's vision.

The Minister further assured that the development projects in Buner will be completed and additional measures will be taken for public service.

Syed Fakhar Jehan also mentioned that the Peshawar Zalmi Cricket Academy will highlight the region's natural talent and provide young people with excellent sports facilities.



WELLINGTON: Alyssa Healy and her team won the ODI series unbeaten, New Zealand vs Australia 3rd Women ODI.



In brief

IIUI extends admission deadline

ISLAMABAD (APP): The International Islamic University, Islamabad (IIUI) has announced an extension to the application deadline for its spring semester admissions. The new deadline is Monday, 6th January, 2025. The extension covers MS and PhD programs, while BS programs in various departments of the 11 Faculties of the university. Prospective students can find details on the offered programs, eligibility criteria, and fee structure on the university's website, cms.iiu.edu.pk. For queries, male applicants can contact on WhatsApp number +92-0319-5213192, while female applicants can contact on +92-0319-5213193.

IRSA releases 65,800 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 65,800 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 39,500 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1470.83 feet and was 72.83 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 17,600 cusecs and 25,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1132.00 feet, which was 83.00 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 22,800, 26,900, 23,200 and 1,100 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 10,500 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 1,700 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Police held 13 law breakers

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Police on Thursday arrested some 13 law breakers, including drug dealers, liquor suppliers, illegal arm owners and others from across the district. According to a police spokesman, the New Town Police held two accused Gul Rehman and Muhammad Ahmed with 550 grams and 560 grams of hashish respectively. Similarly, the Bani and Dharmial Police recovered five liters of liquor each from accused Ikram and Noor Ali respectively. Likewise, three accused were arrested for having illegal arms. The Morgah, Gujar Khan and Dharmial Police recovered a 30-bore pistol each with ammunition from accused Muneer-Rehman, Ahmed Akhlaq and Abdullah respectively. Meanwhile, the Pirwadhai Police held accused Ahsan who was wanted in a robbery case, and the Wah Saddar Police nabbed Inamullah in a cheque dishonor case, while the Wah Cantt Police took Shahzad into custody for his involvement in a trespassing case. A City Police team during routine patrol arrested two accused Janas Khan and Nek Muhammad on the recovery fireworks from their vehicle. The Taxila Police held accused Owais with 150 kites and six strings.

CTP issues traffic plan

RAWALPINDI (APP): City Traffic Police (CTP) here on Monday prepared a special traffic plan to be enforced on Christmas Day and Quaid-e-Azam birth anniversary. According to a CTP spokesman, CTP on the directives of Chief Traffic Officer, Rawalpindi Beenish Fatima, have formed special squads to control one-wheeling.

PTI founder persistently pursuing anti-state agenda: Daniyal

RAWALPINDI (APP): Federal Parliamentary Secretary for Information and Broadcasting Barrister Daniyal Chaudhry has said that the PTI founder had been persistently pursuing the agenda of harming the state and undermining its economic interests.

Addressing a Christmas cake cutting ceremony organized by the Municipal Workers League Municipal Corporation Rawalpindi, he said all the steps taken by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and its founder so far were aimed at harming the state.

"Whether it were the 'black chapter of May 9', the violent incidents of November 26, waving a cipher or character assassi-

nation of state figures outside the IMF headquarters, and now call for civil disobedience and asking the overseas Pakistanis to stop sending remittances home, all have a direct impact on the country. It all aims to weaken the country economically, which is highly condemnable," he added, according to a news release issued on Monday.

Barrister Daniyal said those who were making attempts to get the country declared a defaulter had themselves been rejected by the people. Their all anti-state manoeuvres would fail like those in the past.

He said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had accepted the government as a challenge and taken steps to

improve its economy. Pakistan was now moving on the path of progress, he added. Barrister Daniyal said that the minorities had always played an important role in the country's development and prosperity.

"The festival of Christmas teaches peace, love and brotherhood," he added. The ceremony was also attended by Chief Municipal Officer Imran Ali, Sohail Ahmed, Rafaqat Gondal, Workers League Chief Organizer Tipu Sultan, President Haji Farooq, Senior Vice President Chaudhry Asad and General Secretary Zubair Butt, Muslim League leader Dr Maqbool Ahmed Khan, Saifi Khokhar and Sanobar Gul.

PLF launches groundbreaking academy with Japanese support



F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Under the banner of the Pakistan Lacrosse Federation (PLF) and the Islamabad Lacrosse Association (ILA), a groundbreaking lacrosse academy was held at the Federal College of Education (FCE), Islamabad. The ceremony was graced by Mr. TAKANO Shuichi, Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy of Japan in Pakistan.

The Japan Lacrosse Association generously donated lacrosse equipment to the Pakistan Lacrosse Federation as part of a Sports Diplomacy grant. Engr. Taifoor Zarin, CEO/Founder of the Pakistan Lacrosse Federation, and Mr. Zahid Awan, Secretary of the Islamabad Lacrosse Association, coaches Muqaddas, Gul Pari, Sawaira, and Fozia were also present on this occasion, who conducted workshops and training sessions for all players.

In his speech, Mr. TAKANO Shuichi lauded the rapid development of lacrosse in Pakistan, highlighting that the PLF had successfully conducted over 150 activities and two

national championships within a year, making Pakistan the fastest-developing lacrosse nation in Asia. He emphasized the importance of Sports Diplomacy in strengthening the bond between Japan and Pakistan, recognizing Pakistan as a key ally of Japan. Mr. Takano also pledged Japan's continued support in fostering the growth of lacrosse in Pakistan.

The ceremony was further honored by the presence of Mr. TAKANE Kazumasa, Counselor of the Japanese Embassy in Islamabad, and Mr. Rafay Haleem, Cultural Advisor at the Embassy of Japan. Dr. Samia Dogar, Director of the Federal College of Education, expressed her appreciation for the establishment of the lacrosse academy and assured her full support for its growth.

Engr. Taifoor Zarin extended his gratitude to the Japan Lacrosse Association, the Embassy of Japan, and its dignitaries for their invaluable contributions. He also acknowledged the relentless efforts of Mr. Zahid Awan and Dr. Samia Dogar in making this initiative a reality.

ANF recovers 308 kg drugs in 12 operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 12 operations across the country managed to recover over 308 kg drugs worth Rs 250 million and arrested 11 suspects, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday.

He informed that in an operation, ANF recovered 200 grams hashish from the possession of two suspects rounded up near a university in Islamabad.

Arrested suspects confessed to selling drugs to the students of educational institutions, he added.

In second operation, 1.2 kg ice was recovered from

a Riyadh-bound passenger netted at Multan Airport.

In two separate operations in Karachi, total 30.2 kg ice was recovered from two parcels at a courier office. The parcels were booked for Australia.

159 kg morphine and 53 kg heroin were recovered from different areas of Mastung in Quetta.

40.8 kg hashish hidden in a drum was recovered from two motorcyclists arrested near Musharraf Colony area in Karachi.

In two other operations on M-1 Motorway in Islamabad, ANF recovered 9 kg heroin, 1 kg opium, 1.6 kg ice and 1.2 kg

hashish from the possession of three suspects.

4.2 kg hashish and 500 grams heroin were recovered from the possession of a woman arrested near Kakpul, Islamabad.

In 11th operation, 4 kg ice was recovered from a drug smuggler nabbed near Sibi Road, Quetta.

In 12th operation, 2.4 kg hashish was recovered from a suspect rounded up near Sakhi Sarwar Road, Dera Ghazi Khan.

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



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi visiting F-8 Exchange Chowk Interchange Project in Federal Capital. —APP Photo

Christmas Tree: a timeless of symbol of joy and celebration

ISLAMABAD (APP): As the countdown to Christmas begins, the Christian community in the federal capital, like elsewhere in the country, is joyfully embracing the tradition of decorating evergreen coniferous trees to celebrate the festive season.

With just a day left until the occasion, the sight of colorful, adorned Christmas trees is adding vibrancy and warmth to the holiday spirit in the federal capital.

Prominent malls, hotels, and public spaces across the capital have joined the festivities, proudly displaying dazzling Christmas trees that not only symbolize the season but also serve as focal points of attraction for visitors of all faiths. These displays reflect the inclusive spirit of the season, fostering unity and joy among communities.

The Christmas tree, an iconic element of the festival, represents the hope, renewal, and togetherness that Christmas embodies. Traditionally, these trees—whether real or artificial—are embellished with ornaments such as shimmering baubles, gold and silver bells, radiant stars, pine cones, candies, tinsel, and balloons crafted from various materials, including glass and ceramic. Crowning the tree is often a star or angel, symbolizing the message of goodwill and the herald of peace.

"This is my favorite part of

Christmas," shared Asiya Joseph, a young Christian girl. "Decorating the tree with family brings us together and fills our home with festive cheer. It's a tradition that completes the essence of the celebration."

Asiya also shared how decorating the tree inspires hope and positivity in the time when the country is facing different challenges like of climate, economic etc.

"I love the moment when we switch on the lights for the first time. Its magical the way the tree lights up the room and creates a warm glow, making me feel that the festival has begun. The tree becomes center of our celebrations especially when all my cousins visited us", she said.

Samuel Gill, another young member of the community, expressed his enthusiasm, saying, "The Christmas tree is the heart of our holiday celebrations. It's more than just a decoration—it's a symbol of joy, hope, and cherished family traditions."

"We all enjoy decorating Christmas tree with beautiful ornaments the process in which kids take part enthusiastically", he said.

The season also brings a wave of activity for local businesses. Decorative items, sweet treats, and gifts fly off the shelves as families prepare for the celebrations. Ali Nawaz, a decorative items seller at Karachi Company, noted a steady demand for

fairy lights, candles, and small ornaments. "The Christmas season is always special, and people go all out to make their homes festive and welcoming," he said while talking to APP.

The tradition of decorating Christmas trees traces back to 15th-century Livonia (modern-day Estonia and Latvia), where the custom first began. Over centuries, it has evolved into a universal symbol of Christmas, transcending cultural and geographical boundaries. As the joyous occasion approaches, the Christian community in the federal capital is in the final stages of preparations, with the echo of church bells announcing the birth of Jesus Christ.

The festival will be marked by a variety of activities, including carol singing, gift exchanges, cake-cutting ceremonies, and small gatherings in homes and churches.

The celebration of Christmas is not only a cultural event but also a time to spread love and joy. The illuminated Christmas trees, the melodious carols, and the exchange of heartfelt gifts embody the true spirit of the season—fostering unity, peace, and goodwill. As the evergreen conifer stands tall in homes and public spaces, it serves as a beacon of hope, reminding everyone of the enduring message of Christmas: love, compassion, and the importance of cherishing moments with loved ones.

IESCO issues power suspension programme

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

According to IESCO Spokesperson, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM, Islamabad Circle, F-7/1, Tramuri, ISI, Wahidabad, Burma, Khanna East, PHA Flats, Tamir, Al Mustafa Tower, Peshawar Mor/ G-9/4, GOR, I-10/4, Atwar Bazar, F-11/3, Bhara Kahu, Bhara Kahu, II, Pindi Point, Gharial, MCM, Upper Topa, Peer Suhawah, Athal, Shahpur, PC, TDCP, MCM, Kohala, Sunny Bank Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle, Saidpur Road, Malikabad,

Ghousia Colony, PTCL, Shukrial, Nora Road, Farooq Azam, APhS, Tamsamaabad, Ali Market, Fawara Chowk, Jinnah Road, Iqbal Road, II, Abubakar, Dhok Hasu, Sarafa Bazar, Azizabad, Medina Colony, Kamalabad, Bhadana, Range Road, Ratta Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Bank Road-I, Sir Syed Road, Rahmatabad-I, Jail Park-I, Mehboob Shaheed, Murri Burori, Pindi Board, Lalkarti, Adiala, Gulshan Fatima, Shah Jeevan, Jhawara, Chahan, RCCI-I, II, III, IV & V, Sehala College, Kahota City, II, Kaler City, Sagri, Ghazan Khan, Pind Jatla, Bahr Kalial, Nishan Haider, Mahuta, Hamid Jhangi, Zaraj.I&II, Zeta.I, IST, Dhok Awan, Mohra Nagyal, Kallar City, Doberan, Shahpur, Dhok Noor Feeders, Attock Circle, Margalla, Ghazi Kohli, Binbola,

Behlot, Gulshan Sahat, ECHS D-18, MVHS D-17, New City Block.I, New City Block.A, New City N Block, New City G Block, Pathargarh, Colonel Shan Khan, Purmiana, Hasan Abdal, Burhan, Rashid Minhas, Small Industrial Estate, Munirabad, Garhi Afghana, Hazro, Darya Sharif, Gondal, Bara Zee, People Colony, Dilawarabad, Kachhari, DI Colony, Dhok Fateh, Muslim Town, Nika Kalan, Chhaji Mar, Qutbal, Nara, Mahfouz Shaheed, Galial, Fateh Jang, Amanpur Feeders, Jhelum Circle, F-7 Kachhari, F-13 Garmala, Bolani, Kariala, Mohalla Shaheedan, Shamsabad, Kohar, Kharka, Fatehpur, F-6 Machine Mahalla, F-9 Chak Daulat, Hamlet, Gadari, Bhagwal, New Chakiam, Khai Kalia, Khokharan, Karuli, Scheme.I, Bhai Bahlot, Qalia, Baba

Shaheed, Kantriyala, Kangar Thati Feeders, Chakwal Circle, Bahpur, Line Park, Megan, Miani, Islamia Chowk, Jund Awan, Dhedyal City, Dhoda, Pannawal, Basharat, Rawal, Katas, Ahmedabad, KS Maniz, Jalal Pur, Dhala, Nila, Dharnal, Morat, Jatla, Pera Fatial, Tau Muharram Khan, Khawan Feeders, GSO Circle, From 09:00 AM to 04:00 PM, Ojri Camp, Affendi Colony, Saidpur Road, Faizabad, Sadiqabad, Noor Muhammad Road, Dhok Khaba, Malikabad, Cricket Stadium, Poormiana, Hasan Abdal, Burhan, Rashid. Minhas, Industrial Estate, Munirabad, Garhi Afghana, Kot Dhamek, Mitwa, Ward No. 8, Sohawa, Jarmot, Sandal, Scheme I feeders and 132KV Bestway Cement Factory grid station and surrounding areas.

Police finalize tight security arrangements for Christmas; 5500 cops to be deployed

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Christian community is all set to celebrate the grand festival of Christmas across Rawalpindi division and other parts of the country on Wednesday, December 25, in a befitting manner, while Rawalpindi district police have finalized security arrangements and 5500 policemen will be deployed to ensure security.

In churches, special services would take place where prayers would be offered for peace, progress, and the prosperity of the country. The Christian community has finalized all the preparations to mark this festivity, and they were just giving last-minute touches to their shopping and decorating Christmas trees.

The festival of the Christian community would be marked through different activities ranging from big official gatherings

to cake-cutting ceremonies, illuminating houses, and observing prayers in churches. Special cake-cutting ceremonies are being arranged at different departments to share the happiness of the festival with the Christian staff members.

The cake-cutting ceremonies were held here at Police Lines, WASA, MCR, and in other departments in connection with Christmas celebrations. The participants congratulated the Christian community and felt pleasure in sharing their joy and cheerfulness. The main attractions of the Christmas festival include traditions like Christmas trees, Santa Claus, Christmas carols, and Christmas gifts, which add charm to the festivity.

All young and old have finalized shopping for themselves and their loved ones, while chil-

dren and youngsters were more inclined towards decorating Christmas trees and buying Christmas gifts to show their love to their family and friends.

The main ritual of the Christmas celebration is the decoration of Christmas trees to welcome the arrival of Santa Claus, also known as Father Christmas. It has been observed that a number of shopping malls and hotels in Rawalpindi have installed decked Christmas trees to attract visitors, especially children.

The Christmas trees are usually decked with different ornaments, including baubles, small bells painted gold or silver, stars of different shapes and sizes, pine cones, apples, candies, tinsel, and balloons made from glass, metal, wood, and ceramic.

A number of stalls had been set up in different localities

where the majority of the Christian community resides. The stall owners displayed a variety of decorative ornaments as well as dresses of Santa Claus, which is a source of attraction for youngsters and children.

Different brands and eateries here are also offering good discounts on the occasion of Christmas to attract more customers. It is pertinent to mention here that Rawalpindi District Police have finalized comprehensive security arrangements on the eve of Christmas and a special deployment at churches and public places.

Rawalpindi District Police have devised a foolproof security plan to avoid any untoward situation on the eve of Christmas, and over 5500 police personnel will be deployed.

Under the security plan, all

churches have been divided into three categories, and police personnel, including Elite Force commandos, will be deployed to ensure foolproof security.

According to a police spokesman, no one would be allowed to park vehicles near churches. Walk-through gates would be installed at the entrances of the churches, and visitors would be checked through metal detectors.

The best possible security arrangements would be ensured to avoid any untoward incidents in the city, he said. The security duty at public places, including parks, would be made more effective, he said, adding that security had also been tightened at the entry and exit points of the city, and special checking was ordered for this special occasion.

Over 2400 cops would be

deployed on midnight service duty, while over 2500 police personnel would provide security on Christmas day. The spokesman said City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Hamdani had directed the SPs, DSPs, and SHOs to ensure effective patrolling in their respective areas.

Plain-clothed and well-equipped policemen would perform duties near churches and public places, he added. The security of the churches would be monitored through closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras, while a control room has also been set up where all the departments concerned would work jointly to keep an eye on the security arrangements. Sharpshooters would also be deployed on the rooftops of different buildings, he added.

Embassy resumed operations

KABUL (BNA): The Saudi Arabian Embassy for Afghanistan has announced the resumption of its operations in Kabul. The embassy stated that this step reflects the Saudi government's commitment to serving the people of Afghanistan. This development comes as officials of the Islamic Emirate have previously emphasized maintaining good relations with many countries worldwide, noting that Afghanistan's political ties with the international community are steadily expanding.

88 Afghan families returned

KABUL (Khaama Press): Officials at the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations have stated that 88 Afghan families entered Afghanistan through various borders after being expelled from Iran and Pakistan. According to a report by the Bakhtar News Agency, citing the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations, 88 Afghan migrant families returned to Afghanistan via the Spin Boldak, Torkham, Nimroz, and Islam Qala borders.

‘Telecommunication sites expanding across country’

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology says work is ongoing on more than 550 new telecommunication sites across the country.

Enayatullah Alkozai, spokesperson for the ministry, stated that of this total, 54 telecommunication sites in 14 provinces have already been inaugurated.

“The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology has planned over 550 telecommunication sites through the 10th TDF (Telecom Development Fund) project to cover underserved areas of the country, and this

project is currently under implementation.

So far, 54 telecommunication sites have been inaugurated in the provinces of Kabul, Badakhshan, Uruzgan, Zabul, Nangarhar, Kandahar, Nuristan, Maidan Wardak, Paktia, Paktika, Badghis, Helmand, Ghazni, and Kunar, in addition to the Ghazni-Zabul and Nangarhar-Kunar highways,” he said.

Some citizens see the increase in telecommunication sites as beneficial in solving problems faced by people in remote areas.

“Establishing telecommunication sites in remote areas of Afghanistan can

provide many facilities for the people and better solve their problems,” said Ahmad Ali, a resident of Kabul.

“In Kandahar province, telecommunications services are good in nearby districts, but in remote areas such as Khakrez and Registan, services are weak or nonexistent in some places,” said Ehsanullah, another resident of Kabul.

Previously, the Afghanistan Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (ATRA) announced that 8,000 telecommunication sites are active across the country and the process of installing new sites in remote areas is ongoing.

Minister of Publications Affairs chaired meeting



KABUL (BNA): The Media Violations Evaluation Commission convened its regular meeting on Monday under the chairmanship of Mohajer Farahi, Deputy Minister of Publications Affairs at the Ministry of Information and Culture and Deputy Head of the Commission.

During the session, the

Deputy Minister reviewed the decisions made in the commission's previous meeting.

Additionally, teams assigned by the commission to address issues related to Kawon Ghagh and Solha Sahar radio stations presented their reports.

Following the review,

the commission members approved the issuance of a license to Solha Sahar Radio.

Complaints filed by journalists against Rah-e-Farda and Arezo Television were also addressed.

In conclusion, six other issues were discussed, and necessary decisions were made accordingly.

1,500 tons of fish meat processed in Kunduz

KUNDUZ (TOLONews): The Directorate of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock of Kunduz Province stated that 1,500 tons of fish meat have been processed this solar year from 400 fish farms in the province.

According to the directorate, in recent years, the establishment of fish farms and the use of fish meat in the province have significantly grown.

Jumauddin Omar Khil, the livestock promotion manager of the directorate, said: “In Kunduz Province, we have a total of 400 fish farms.

This year, which is the fish harvesting season, approximately 1,500 tons of fish have been obtained from these farms.”

Some fish sellers in the province say that with the arrival of winter, the number of their customers increases, and they earn a good income.

Mujtaba, one of the fish sellers, said: “In winter, our sales are higher compared to summer. Because the weather is cold and fish have a warm nature, people consume more fish.”

Mohammad Hussain Salami, another seller, stated: “In winter, the fish mar-

ket flourishes more. Many people come to buy fish, but in summer, the market is less vibrant.”

Mustafa Sharifi said: “People's interest in consuming fish increases in winter because fish are rich in vitamins that are beneficial for the body. Various types of fish are available in Kunduz.”

In recent years, many citizens in various provinces of the country have turned to establishing fish farms. This initiative has managed to support their families' living expenses and improve their economic conditions.

Taliban’s ban deepens Afghanistan’s crisis

KABUL (Am TV): Two years have passed since the Taliban imposed a sweeping ban on women working in non-governmental organizations (NGOs), a decree that has left many families grappling with poverty and despair. The restriction, issued by the Taliban's Ministry of Economy in December 2022, barred thousands of women from their jobs and severed a critical lifeline for households across Afghanistan.

For women like Zeenat, the ban has been catastrophic. Once the sole providers for their seven-member family, she and her sister lost their NGO jobs following the decree. “My sister and I were the only ones earning to support our five siblings and sick parents,” Zeenat, a resident of Farah province, said.

“We worked hard for years, studied, and tried to rise above poverty. But when we were dismissed, everything fell apart. Now, with our parents ill and no income, we suffer endless-

ly. We don't even know how to provide for ourselves.”

Zeenat is one of thousands of Afghan women who were abruptly forced out of the workforce, many of whom had served as the primary earners for their families.

The economic impact has been devastating, particularly for female-led households. Najla, another resident of Farah, echoed Zeenat's frustration.

“For two years, I've been unemployed and battling severe economic hardship,” she said. “Despite being young, educated, and capable, we're confined to our homes. We have no choice but to endure this suffering.”

The ban, coupled with restrictions on education for women and girls, has drawn widespread international condemnation and amplified fears of a worsening humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan.

The United States has been among the most vocal critics of the Taliban's policies.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken recently called on the Taliban to reverse all decrees limiting women's rights, expressing grave concern over the continued marginalization of women and girls.

Rina Amiri, the US special envoy for Afghan women, girls, and human rights, warned that barring women from work and education could plunge Afghanistan further into darkness.

“The exclusion of women undermines the country's prospects for recovery and progress,” Amiri said.

For many Afghan women, the Taliban's restrictions represent more than economic hardship; they symbolize a betrayal of the hard-won progress achieved in the two decades before the Taliban's return to power. Women who invested years in education and professional growth now find themselves sidelined, with little hope for change under the current regime.

Taliban install security cameras in Baghlan

BAGHLAN (Amu TV): The Taliban have installed 350 security cameras across Pul-e-Khumri, the center of Baghlan province, saying the move is aimed at enhancing security in the northern city.

The cameras have been placed in various locations throughout the city, the Taliban-run Bakhtar News Agency reported on Monday.

This is part of a broader campaign by the Taliban, who have installed surveillance systems in multiple urban centers since seizing control of Afghanistan in August 2021.

Speculation has surfaced about the involvement of Huawei, the Chinese technology company, in the installation of these security systems. While the extent of the company's role remains unclear, the reports highlight China's deepening relationship with the Taliban. Beijing was one of the first governments to acknowledge a Taliban-appointed ambassador and has signaled its willingness to engage with the regime diplomatically and economically.

Human rights groups have voiced alarm over the Taliban's growing surveillance network. Activists argue that these measures are aimed not just at bolstering security but also at monitoring the daily lives of citizens and stifling dissent.

Amnesty International has strongly criticized the surveillance initiative, describing it as an infringement on fundamental rights, particularly for women and girls. In a statement issued last year, the organization noted that as many as 62,000 security cameras had already been installed in Kabul and other cities under the guise of “national security.”

“By increasing surveillance in public spaces, the Taliban are perpetuating policies that violate basic freedoms,” statement read.

Museum rehabilitation demanded

JALALABAD (Pajhwok): Some residents of eastern Nangarhar province have demanded the rehabilitation of Farnay Hada historic museum which would help attract more tourists.

This museum used to house important artifacts from the Buddhist era and Afghanistan's historic periods, but these items turned to ruins due to past wars and unauthorized excavations.

This area is located in Behsud district on the outskirts of Jalalabad city, and local residents say that if these ruins were not taken care of, they would disappear.

Naeem Khan, a resident, told Pajhwok Afghan News if this historic place get back to its previous shape it would help attract tourist.

“Tourist come here from one place and another, we have heard from the elders that there used to be idols and other historical relics here, which have all been destroyed, but these ruins should be rebuilt because many people come to see them.”

Subhat Khan, another resident, said about 50 years ago, there were many historical artifacts and buildings in this place, but they were destroyed during the war and the historical artifacts were looted.

Meanwhile, officials of the Information and Cultural Department said that efforts for the Haday historic museum's rehabilitation started.

Sediqullah Quraishi, head of the Information and Cultural Department, said UNESCO was trying to help rebuild this historical site, and the ministry has launched efforts to allocate funds from its budget.

He said: “Many parts of this museum have been damaged by recent revolutions and wars, and many of its artifacts have been stolen in unauthorized excavations, it has special significance in our history, we are trying to restore it and prepare it for tourists.”

Energy and water sectors: Turkish investors explore opportunities in Afghanistan



KABUL (BNA): Mullah Abdul Latif Mansoor, the Acting Minister of Energy and Water, discussed investment opportunities in Afghanistan's water and energy sectors during a meeting with Turkish

scholars and investors. According to the Ministry of Energy and Water of Afghanistan, the Acting Minister highlighted Afghanistan's favorable investment conditions and the availability of abundant

resources for energy production.

He emphasized the Islamic Emirate's commitment to facilitating investment opportunities and ensuring the safety and security of investors' lives

and assets.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Turkish investors expressed their willingness to invest in the development of energy and water management sectors in Afghanistan.

Ministry finalizes purchase of 38,000 tons of wheat

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (AIL) has announced the completion of the process to purchase an additional 38,000 tons of wheat from farmers across the country.

Officials of the ministry emphasized that, under the directive of the leader of the Islamic Emirate, wheat worth over one billion afghani has been purchased from farmers, and the process of transporting and storing it in the country's silos is ongoing.

Agha Jan Akhund, the

deputy minister of the Ministry of AIL, stated that 17,000 tons of wheat will be stored exclusively in the central silo of Kabul.

“All provincial warehouses are now full and locked. The wheat being transferred to the Kabul silo is currently being unloaded, and this process will be completed soon,” he said.

Qudratullah Haqyar, the Director of Strategic Reserves of the Ministry of Agriculture, said that the wheat is being stored in a standardized manner.

He further stated that the

collected wheat from the provinces of Kandahar, Helmand, Kunduz, and Baghlan has been transferred to the central silo in Kabul, while the wheat from other provinces has been stored in six other silos.

“Based on the decree of the Amir al-Mu'minin, one billion afghani were allocated for purchasing wheat from 11 provinces, and this wheat has been stored in seven other provinces,” he said.

According to Zakaria Rasooli, the Technical Deputy of the Central Silo,

there are adequate facilities for storing the accumulated wheat.

Rasooli said: “The wheat is regularly inspected, and if issues such as insect infestation arise, necessary measures, including fumigation, will be undertaken.”

Based on information from the Central Silo officials, there are currently five wheat storage silos across the country. The Kabul silo has a storage capacity of 72,000 tons, Pul-e-Khumri 40,000 tons, Balkh 40,000 tons, and Herat 20,000 tons.

AJC confirms release of seven TV employees from prison

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Afghanistan Journalists Center (AJC) reported that the employees of Arezo TV, who had been detained, were released after two weeks upon providing “guarantees.”

In a statement, the center announced the release of Amanullah Azimi, Khalid Bakrazi, Amir Hossein Attryan, Zahir Faizi, Samir Ahmad Baik, Haroon Irfan, and Bektash Rofi, employees of Arezo TV, from the custody of Taliban.

It is worth noting that intelligence and the Ministry for the Promotion

of Virtue and Prevention of Vice agents had sealed the Arezo TV office in Kabul several weeks ago and taken two of its employees into custody.

Seven of these employees were released after two weeks upon providing “guarantees,” but the TV station in Kabul has not yet been allowed to resume its activities. The trial for these employees is scheduled to take place in a week.

The Afghanistan Journalists Center welcomed the release of the Arezo TV employees and urged the authorities to close the case

and allow Arezo TV to resume its operations unconditionally.

Arezo TV was established in 2006 in Mazar-e-Sharif, and its office in Kabul began operations in 2009. The TV station is considered one of the prominent media outlets in the fields of reporting, documentary production, series, and film dubbing.

The detention and subsequent release of Arezo TV employees highlight ongoing challenges faced by media outlets under the current political climate in Afghanistan. While the release is a

positive development, the restriction on the station's ability to operate freely raises concerns about media freedom in the country.

The call by the Afghanistan Journalists Center for the closure of the case and the unconditional reopening of Arezo TV reflects broader anxieties about press freedom in Afghanistan, with many hoping for a more transparent and supportive environment for journalists in the future. The situation serves as a reminder of the ongoing struggles for media independence in the region.

UN supports over 80,000 women-led small businesses

KABUL (Khaama Press): The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has announced its support for over 80,000 small businesses led by women in Afghanistan, contributing significantly to the growth of local families.

Stephen Rodrigues, head of the UNDP office in Afghanistan, stated that their initiatives had not only supported these businesses but also provided employment opportunities for 900,000 people across the country. Additionally, he highlighted that 4.5 million people had benefited from these programs.

Rodrigues emphasized that UNDP's efforts to empower women entrepreneurs have been crucial, especially after the restrictions placed on women and girls' education following the events of August 2021. As a result, many women and girls have turned to small businesses to support themselves and their families.

Despite the challenges and restrictions placed on them, female entrepreneurs continue to thrive. The recent handicrafts and production exhibition in Kabul, where many women had a prominent presence, is a testament to their



resilience and entrepreneurial spirit.

There has been a noticeable increase in interest among Afghan women, especially young girls, in business activities. Many are starting small and medium enterprises, seeing entrepreneurship as a viable path to financial independence and social contribution.

Meanwhile, the recent survey showed that women in Afghanistan are still facing severe discrimination and violations of their human rights, including profound discrimination, operational limitations, and a severely weak financial system, which has significantly limited women's

access to loans from banks. According to the report, out of 41% of more than 3,000 women who were interviewed, only 5% stated that they had received loans from banks or small financial institutions.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has reported that 73% of these women are unable to travel to local markets without a male guardian (mahram).

The report further states: “When asked about the limitations of running a business as a woman, 32% of women-led small and medium enterprises believed that gender discrimination created barriers to accessing markets for their busi-

nesses, 28% cited difficulties in procuring supplies, and 19% referred to challenges in securing formal loans.”

This data highlights the many barriers women in Afghanistan face in both personal and professional spheres. These restrictions not only hinder women's economic independence but also contribute to their ongoing marginalization in society.

Addressing these issues requires significant reforms, particularly in the financial system and legal framework, to enable women to fully participate in the economy and regain their rights to equal opportunities.



GAZA STRIP: People carrying body of a man killed in an Israeli attack on the Bureij refugee camp.

Bangladesh tells India it wants ex-PM

DHAKA (AFP): Bangladesh has told India that it wants former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, who fled to New Delhi after being ousted in August, returned to the country for the "judicial process", the acting head of the country's foreign ministry said on Monday.

Additionally, Bangladesh's anti-corruption commission said on Monday that it has launched a probe into allegations of \$5 billion embezzlement by Hasina and her family in connection with a Russian-backed nuclear power plant. "We sent a note verbale to the Indian government saying that the Bangladesh government wants her (Hasina) back here for [the] judicial process," Tuhid Hossain told reporters, referring to diplomatic correspondence between the two countries. Hossain did not specify what the judicial process was connected to.

India's foreign minister and Hasina's son, Sajeb Wazed Joy, did not immediately respond to Reuters' requests seeking comment. Along with the ex-premier, those subject to the commission's inquiry include Joy and Hasina's niece, Tulip Siddiq, a British lawmaker and government minister.

The allegations were raised by a writ seeking an investigation filed in the high court by Hasina's political opponent, Bobby Hajjaj, chairman of the Nationalist Democratic Movement party. "We seek justice through our court," Hajjaj told AFP today. Key allegations relate to the funding of the \$12.65bn Rooppur nuclear plant, the first in a South Asian country. Moscow is bankrolling it with a 90 per cent loan.

A statement from the commission today said it had launched an inquiry into allegations that Hasina and family members had "embezzled \$5bn" from the Rooppur plant via "various offshore bank accounts in Malaysia". It said its

investigations were examining "questionable procurement practices related to the overpriced construction" of the plant.

"The claims of kickbacks, mismanagement, money laundering, and potential abuse of power raise significant concerns about the integrity of the project and the use of public funds," the commission said. The graft allegations also include theft from a government building scheme for the homeless. Hasina, 77, fled by helicopter on August 5 into exile in India, infuriating many Bangladeshis determined that she face trial for alleged "mass murder".

It was not possible to contact Hasina for comment. According to a statement from the British prime minister's office, Siddiq has "denied any involvement in the claims" accusing her of embezzlement. Joy, who is understood to be based in the United States, was also unavailable for comment to AFP.

LAHORE: The process of transferring prisoners convicted by military courts for their involvement in the May 9 tragedy is underway. 11 individuals sentenced by the military court for the May 9 cases have been moved to the Kot Lakhpat Jail Lahore.

The transferred individuals include Mohammad Imran Mehboob, Ali Shah, Jan Mohammad, Zia-ur-Rehman, Ali Iftikhar, Abdul Hadi, Dawood Khan, Fahim Haider, Mohammad Hashir, Mohammad Ashiq Khan, and Mohammad Bilal. Earlier, twelve out of the twenty-five convicts were transferred to Kot Lakhpat Jail Lahore. Now, eleven more have been shifted to the Kot Lakhpat Jail Lahore. It is notable that the Field General Court Martial had sentenced 25 individuals involved in the May 9 incident. According to the ISPR, the sentences were handed down following the thorough examination of evidence and due legal procedures.

Convicts transferred to Jail

F.P. Report

Rear Admiral Jawad takes over as Commander

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Rear Admiral Jawad Ahmed assumed command as Commander Central Punjab (COM-CEP), COMCEP exercises authority over all Pakistan Navy units from Bahawalpur to Wazirabad and is also the Commandant of Pakistan Navy War College, Lahore.

Rear Admiral Jawad Ahmed was commissioned in Operations Branch of Pakistan Navy in 1992. He has a distinguished career, holding a wide range of command and staff appointments. These include Personal Staff Officer to Vice Chief of the Naval Staff, Directing Staff at PN War College, Commanding Officer of PNS SAIF, Defence Attaché of Pakistan in Malaysia, Commander Surface Task Group-3, Commandant of Pakistan Naval Academy, Commander West at Gwadar, Hydrographer of Pakistan, Chairman PNSC, Deputy Chief of Naval



Staff (T&P), and Director General C4I at Naval Headquarters.

The Admiral is an alumnus of PN War College Lahore, Defence Services Command and Staff College Bangladesh, and the National Defence University Islamabad. In recognition of his meritorious services, he has been awarded the Hilal-e-Imtiaz (Military).

The Change of Command ceremony was

held at Naval Complex Walton, Lahore, where Rear Admiral Azhar Mahmood handed over command to the newly appointed Commander Central Punjab. Rear Admiral Jawad Ahmed was presented with a Guard of Honour and introduced to the staff officers of Headquarters COMCEP. The ceremony was attended by Pakistan Navy officers, CPOs, sailors, and civilian personnel.

Trudeau faces pressure from his own MPs to quit

OTTAWA (Reuters): Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, whose party looks set to lose power early next year, is under increasing pressure from his own legislators to step down and let someone else take over. The ruling Liberals face obliteration in the next election after more than nine years in office amid voter fatigue as well as anger over high prices and a housing crisis.

The Canadian Broadcasting Corp said more than 50 Liberal members of parliament from Ontario — the most populous of the 10 provinces and the party's main stronghold — held a call on Saturday and agreed Trudeau had to step down. "There is no alternative but to have the leadership change now," Liberal legislator Chandra Arya, traditionally a Trudeau loyalist, told the CBC on Sunday. As of last Friday, only 18 legislators had publicly demanded that Trudeau quit.

Last week, Trudeau suffered two major blows — then finance minister Chrystia Freeland quit amid a policy dispute over spending and all the opposition parties then said they would unite to bring down the minority Liberal government. If he quit and the party had time to choose a new permanent leader, the contenders would potentially include Freeland, Foreign Minister Melanie Joly, Innovation Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne, and former central bank governor Mark Carney.

Trudeau though shows no intention of leaving soon, The Globe and Mail, citing a Liberal source, said he would spend Christmas with family before taking a skiing vacation in the Pacific province of British Columbia. A Liberal source told Reuters last week that Trudeau would mull his future over the Christmas and New Year.

Opposition parties say that given Trudeau's days are

clearly numbered, and the incoming US administration is promising to impose a crippling 25% tariff on all Canadian imports, the country needs an election now to produce a stable government. Polls show the Liberals would be crushed by the official opposition right-of-center Conservatives in an election.

The Liberal Party released an advert over the weekend saying that if the Conservatives won, they would slash public spending. The spot did not mention Trudeau once. Trudeau's options include staying on until a near-certain defeat in a no-confidence motion, probably in March, stepping down next month to allow the party to name an interim leader, or ending the current session of parliament to buy the Liberals some time to choose a new leader and prepare for the next election, though that risked alienating voters.

10 killed as plane crashes in Brazil

BRASILIA: A small plane has crashed into a tourist hotspot in southern Brazil, killing all 10 people on board and injuring more than a dozen people on the ground, officials have said.

The twin-engine Piper PA-42-1000 hit the chimney of a home and the second floor of a different house before crashing into a shop in a largely residential neighbourhood of Gramado shortly after takeoff from Canela, Brazil's Civil Defense agency said. Rio Grande do Sul Governor Eduardo Leite told a news conference that the aircraft's owner and pilot, Luiz Claudio Galeazzi, was killed along with nine members of his family. — Aljazeera

Bilawal emphasizes urgency of addressing climate change

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has once again emphasized the urgency of addressing climate change on a "war footing" basis to secure the future of Pakistan's next generations. Highlighting the need for new legislation to ensure equitable and unrestricted internet access for sustainable development, he vowed to introduce the Bill of Digital Rights. He also stressed aligning the Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) with modern requirements by prioritizing youth perspectives in its formulation.

According to a press release issued by the Media Cell Bilawal House, Chairman PPP, while addressing a convocation at University of Sindh in Jamshoro, pointed out that over 65% of the country's population comprises young people. Addressing the students at the convocation, he said, "You are the future of this country, and the future of this country lies in your hands." Speaking on the challenges faced by the youth, he remarked that development budgets and key decisions are made by individuals aged 60 or above who rarely think about the future of the youth.

Discussing the importance of the internet in today's era, Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that fiber-optic cables and robust internet infrastructure are the future for both current and upcoming generations. He asserted that affordable and uninterrupted internet access is a fundamental right in the modern world. Criticizing censorship, he noted, "Even today, there is fear that the public might raise their voices through the internet." He further pointed out that senior officials in Islamabad do not fully understand the internet because they don't use it themselves, and decisions to block or slow down internet services disproportionately affect the youth. "We must fight for our digital rights as part of our democratic rights, and we will continue this struggle," he affirmed.

Bilawal highlighted that students have always played a central role in



historic struggles for public rights, including under the leadership of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto. "This is why student unions remain banned to this day, as they fear the power of students," he added.

Urging the youth to support the enactment of a Digital Rights Bill, he vowed to visit educational institutions across the country to garner student support for this legislation. "I will present a Digital Bill written by us, for us, in the National Assembly as your representative. Share your suggestions with me on Instagram, Facebook, and X," he urged.

The Chairman also spoke at length about climate change, declaring it the biggest issue facing both the world and Pakistan's future generations. He warned that melting glaciers in the Himalayas, which have provided water through the Indus River for centuries, could lead to devastating floods for future generations. "Pakistan is unprepared for the threats posed by climate change," he stated, calling on students to prepare for a united response from Gilgit-Baltistan to the end of the Indus River.

Bilawal stressed the need for green infrastructure in Pakistan. "Before planning six to seven new canals, attention must be paid to climate-resilient infrastructure. Railways, airports, motorways, and highways already exist, but today we need green infrastructure," he remarked.

He questioned why the country continues to rely on expensive electricity rather than focusing on alternative, eco-friendly energy sources like wind, solar, and hydropower.

He criticized the government's failure to provide electricity despite claims of surplus supply. "They say load-shedding has ended, but if they visit Sindh, we can show them that load-shedding continues. How can this be justified when surplus electricity is supposedly available?" he questioned.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari pointed out that while the Constitution guarantees a clean environment as a fundamental right, little has been done to achieve this goal. He expressed hope that when today's youth step into decision-making roles, this situation will change. "We can tackle climate change and build a cleaner, greener Pakistan together," he concluded.

The Chairman congratulated students receiving their degrees and extended his best wishes for their future. He emphasized that education is the greatest gift parents can give, describing it as an asset that cannot be taken away. "Property, money, and other resources are nothing compared to knowledge," he remarked. During the ceremony, Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari distributed medals and certificates among the students. Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah was also present on the occasion.

Biden commutes most federal death sentences

WASHINGTON: United States President Joe Biden has commuted the sentences of 37 of the 40 people on federal death row in his weeks in office before the second term of President-elect Donald Trump. The move, announced on Monday, means that the 37 individuals will instead face life in prison for their convictions, according to the White House. Three other inmates convicted of deadly hate or "terrorism" crimes will continue to face execution.

"Make no mistake: I condemn these murderers, grieve for the victims of their despicable acts, and ache for all the families who have suffered unimaginable and irreparable loss," Biden said in a statement. "But guided by my conscience and my experience as a public defender, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Vice President, and now President, I am more convinced than ever that we must stop the use of the death penalty at the federal level," he said.

The announcement comes just weeks before Trump is set to take office. The president-elect, whose first four-year term ended in 2021, has regularly called for the death penalty for undocumented migrants who kill US citizens. During his first term, he oversaw the execution of 13 federal inmates — the most under any president in the last 120 years. Biden, who defeated Trump in the 2020 election, campaigned as an opponent of the death penalty. His administration imposed a moratorium on most federal executions when he took office.

"These commutations are consistent with the moratorium my administration has imposed on federal executions, in cases other than terrorism and hate-motivated mass murder," Biden said in the statement. Three inmates will remain on federal death row. They include Dzhokhar Tsarnaev —

who helped carry out the Boston Marathon bombing that killed three in 2013 — and Dylann Roof — a white supremacist who in 2015 shot and killed nine Black churchgoers in a racist attack in Charleston — South Carolina. Robert Bowers, who killed 11 Jewish worshippers during a 2018 mass shooting at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, will also continue to face execution.

Meanwhile, nine people convicted of murdering fellow prisoners, four convicted of murders committed during bank robberies and one who killed a prison guard were among those who had their sentences commuted. Also included was Billie Jerome Allen, who was convicted in 1998 at the age of 19 for killing a security guard during a robbery in Missouri.

The case has long attracted attention for what Amnesty International has described as "serious concerns about racial bias, his young age at the time, and a lack of evidence linking him to the crime." Biden's announcement follows urging from several rights groups, who pointed to Trump's rhetoric and history when it comes to federal executions.

There had been no executions at the federal level since 2003 when Trump took office. The last federal execution in the US took place on January 16, 2021, four days before Trump left the White House. In a statement, Amnesty International USA Executive Director Paul O'Brien applauded Biden's move, but said he needed to go further. "The death penalty is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment, and President Biden's eleventh-hour decision before leaving office to commute these death sentences is a big moment for human rights," O'Brien said. — Aljazeera

Tribunal upholds JUI-F MPA's win

F.P. Report

QUETTA: The Election Tribunal on Monday dismissed a plea filed by Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) candidate challenging the victory of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl's (JUI-F) Zabid Ali Raki from PB-31 Washuk.

Justice Abdullah Baloch, the judge of the Election Tribunal, announced the reserved verdict, declaring the appeal as "dismissed due to insufficient evidence". The tribunal ruled that the petitioner, Muejibur Rehman Muhammad Hassani, failed to provide adequate proof to support his claims of rigging. Zabid Ali Raki's lawyers, Kamran Murtaza, Qazi Najeed, and Baloch Khan, appeared before the tribunal, while the petitioner and his counsel were absent during the hearings. The ECP was represented by Assistant Directors Shahzad Aslam and Naseer Ahmed.

It is pertinent to mention here that Zabid Ali Raki of the JUI-F was declared winner from PB-31 in the general election as he bagged 17058 votes. PML-N's Muejibur Rehman Muhammad Hassani who secured 16008 votes had challenged the victory.

Cabinet approves relief emergency

(Continued from Page 1)

"Keeping in view their long and useful services" and having no prospects of further promotion, the Provincial Cabinet granted one step up-gradation as personal to all the employees of defunct FATA Development Corporation as per the recommendations of the Committee constituted for looking into their grievances and the decision of the Supreme Court of Pakistan. They had put up over 36 years of services without any promotions.

Cabinet approved forwarding of resolution No 118 adopted by the Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to the Federal Government. "Although Article 33 states that the state shall discourage partisan, racial, tribal, sectarian and provincial prejudices among its citizens, yet the Islamabad police are committing atrocities against the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, especially the Pashtuns, and are harassing the Pashtuns who do business there. Because they are residents of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, they are treated as if they are not residents of this country. The atrocities being perpetrated by the Federal Government against the Pashtun community are illegal and unconstitutional. Therefore, this assembly recommends to the provincial government to strongly recommend to the federal government that the Islamabad police end the atrocities and barbarity against the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, especially the Pashtuns, and not harass them unnecessarily while doing business in Islamabad."

The Cabinet approved amendments in rule 12 (2) of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Civil Servants (Appointments, Promotion & Transfer) Rules 1989. As per the amendments posts in BS-3-15 of district cadre should be filled only from domicile holders of the district concerned. Relaxing the ban, the Cabinet allowed creation of 221 posts of various categories in the Health Department. The Cabinet approved appointment two members of Academic Search Committee under Section 12(2)(e) of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Universities Act, 2012.

To make the establishment of Girls' Cadet College D.I.Khan as functional, the Cabinet approved extension of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government Education & Training Institutions Ordinance 1971 to the Girls' Cadet College D.I.Khan and also approved a grant of Rs. 300 million for it. To bring uniformity in legislation with other provinces and maintain provincial autonomy the Cabinet approved amendments in Sections 13 (2) & (3), section 18 and section 20 (2) of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Financial Management Act No. XXIX of 2022. This is aimed at best utilization of the Treasury & Accounts Establishment which is the attached formation of the provincial Finance Department.

The Cabinet approved allocation and release of Rs. 3.5 million Grant-in-Aid for Financial Year 2024-25 for China Window at Peshawar. The China Window was established as a result of Memorandum of Understanding signed with the Embassy of the People's Republic of

China Islamabad which is playing a role to bring people of both countries together. The Cabinet approved for partnering with Bank of Khyber, Peshawar in respect of ADP 2024-25 Project 1646-240152 "Development of Community Based Accommodation for Facilitating Tourists", wherein modalities with Bank of Khyber were cleared as services charges of Bank of Khyber were agreed @ 10%. Called as 'Mezban' this project is aimed at boosting tourism through improving community based accommodation facilities for tourists. Maximum ceiling of loan to each individual will be Rs. 3.00 million under this project. The target districts included Dir, Chitral, Swat, and Mansehra, however, priority will be given to valleys with more influx to tourists.

The Cabinet approved release of funds for district development activities/schemes in different districts of the province. Released funds will be utilized with 60% in Municipal Services including WSS and 40% social services. The Cabinet approved establishment of Water & Sanitation Services Company, Haripur along with provision of funds to the tune of Rs. 250.00 million in the upcoming budget through supplementary grant for it. The Cabinet also approved the transfer an amount of Rs. 30 billion from Government Treasury to the Debt Management Fund through supplementary grant during current Financial Year 2024-25. The Cabinet also sanctioned special lump sum grant of Rs. 14,338,864/- in respect of six contractual employees of Police Public School.