

Four die in road mishap
F.P. Report
NEELUM: Four people died when a jeep plunged into River Neelum near Nagdar Kinari area of Uthmuqam on Tuesday. According to local rescue sources, the jeep sank into the river due to which they were facing problems in their rescue operation. However, the bodies of the victims have been retrieved from the river. They all belonged to Mansehra, rescue sources said.

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Imran, others pleas rejected
F.P. Report
RAWALPINDI: An anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Rawalpindi on Tuesday rejected the petitions filed by the former prime minister and PTI founder Imran Khan, Fawad Chaudhry and Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Omar Ayub Khan, seeking the provision of CCTV camera footage of the court's hearing dated December 5, 2024 in the GHQ attack case.

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No compromise on N-programme

PM hopeful of positive outcomes of govt-PTI talks for country's peace, stability

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday assuring the government's sincere efforts and contributions, expressed the hope that the talks initiated between the ruling coalition and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf would bring about positive outcomes to promote peace and economic stability in the country.

The prime minister, in his opening remarks at the meeting of the federal cabinet he chaired, said that on the National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq's initiative, the first round of talks with PTI was held on Monday with the second one scheduled on January 2, 2025.

He said the government's committee comprised Ishaq Dar, Rana Sanaullah, Irfan Siddiqui, Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, Naveed Qamar, Dr Khalid Magbool Siddiqui, Abdul Aleem Khan, Ijazul Haq and Khalid Magsi. He said the process would meet success only if both parties set aside their likes and dislikes for the sake of national interests.

"I do not doubt anyone's intentions. I hope both PTI and the government party will bring about the outcomes for the country's benefits and promote the economic stability" the prime minister said and mentioned the reduced policy rate to 13%, inflation below 5%, constant surge in exports and remittances. Referring to his meetings with Bangladesh's Chief Advisor Dr Yunus, and the presidents of Indonesia and Turkiye on the sidelines of the D-8 Summit in Cairo, he said Pakistan-Bangladesh ties were entering a new era as the latter had abolished erstwhile 100% scanning of Pakistan's export products and special desk at airports for screening

Pakistani passport holders.

He said Pakistan was also reciprocating with positive indicators and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar was scheduled to visit Dhaka in February. "But all these efforts will come to fruition if we promote the national unity and solidarity. This is a good initiative of the National Assembly speaker. We will contribute with sincerity. But it takes two to tango. I hope both parties will play their part to serve the national interests and promote national stability," the prime minister added.

Coming to the US sanctions on NDC and other entities, the prime minister called the move illogical as Pakistan's nuclear system was not meant for any aggression but only deterrence. He told the cabinet members that Pakistan's nuclear system was very dear to its 240 million people and they would never make any compromise on it.

Prime Minister Shehbaz told the cabinet members that said that terrorism witnessed a surge in the country during the last few months as in a recent attack, the terrorists killed 17 security personnel and the security forces also eliminated eight of the Khawarij. The cabinet members also offered Fateha for the martyred souls of the security personnel.

He said that in coordination with the provincial governments, all-out resources were being utilised to purge the country of terrorism and reiterated the resolve not to sit idle until the objective was achieved. Regarding the sectarian clashes in KPK, the prime minister criticised the provincial government for utilising the resources to march on Islamabad, instead of addressing the issue.

Mly courts' verdicts announced under law enacted by parliament

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In response to statements on recent verdicts by military courts, the Foreign Office on Tuesday reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to fulfilling all its international human rights obligations, said that the verdicts had been made under a law enacted by the Parliament of Pakistan and in line with the judgment of the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

"Pakistan's legal system is consistent with international human rights law including provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)," the FO Spokesperson said in a state-

ment. The spokesperson added that the country's legal system had remedies of judicial review by the superior courts and guaranteed the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The statement added that Pakistan believed in constructive and productive dialogue to promote principles of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. "We remain fully committed to implementing our commitments under the GSP Plus Scheme and core international human rights conventions," the spokesperson said adding "We will continue to engage with our international partners including the European

Union to uphold the international human rights law, without any discrimination and double standards".

US raises concern over military courts: After the European Union and the United Kingdom, the United States has also raised concerns over the recent sentencing of 25 civilians by military courts for their involvement in the nationwide May 9 riots last year.

US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said: "The United States is concerned by the sentencing of Pakistani civilians in a military tribunal and calls upon Pakistani authorities to respect the right to a fair trial and due process."

Shehbaz inaugurates F-8 underpass

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday inaugurated the F-8 underpass – completed in record 42 days – to ease the traffic flow on two main arteries of the Federal Capital, Jinnah Avenue and 9th Avenue.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony of the F-8 underpass flanked by Ministers Senator Mohsin Raza Naqvi, Attaullah Tarar, Members of National Assembly and the Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA), the prime minister said it was a propitious moment that this underpass was successfully completed within 42 days after laying its foundation stone.

PM Shehbaz Sharif lauded the efforts of the interior minister and his team for setting a new record. "This is the fashion in which nations progress through day and night struggle," he added. The Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif also felicitated Chairman Development Authority (CDA), Muhammad Ali Randhawa, his team, and the contractor for achieving an unusual milestone.

The Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif expressed the hope that the newly constructed underpass would help facilitate the traffic of the metropolis and the civic agency would also complete the Serena Chowk underpass in similar way. He also appreciated the Islamabad Traffic Police for maintaining smooth flow of traffic on project site.

Earlier, Interior Minister Mohsin Raza Naqvi appreciated the entire Development Authority (CDA) team and congratulated Chairman CDA for completion of the F-8 underpass within 42 days. He said that on the prime minister's instructions the Development Authority (CDA) would establish a nursery by March next year for providing low cost and quality plants to the residents of Capital. He acknowledged that the ICT Traffic Police did play a crucial role in maintaining vehicular traffic on the project site.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairing the federal cabinet meeting.

Pakistan set to host ICC event after 28 years

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The International Cricket Council (ICC) today announced the eight-team ICC Champions Trophy 2025 scheduled to be hosted by Pakistan from 19 February to 10 March. The matches will be played at the three venues of Pakistan – Rawalpindi, Karachi and Lahore, while at least four matches will be hosted by Dubai International Cricket Stadium in Dubai.

Karachi's National Bank Stadium and Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium will host three group matches each, while Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium will host a minimum of four matches. All matches will begin at 2pm local time. The tournament will kick-off with a Group A fixture involving Defending champions Pakistan and New Zealand at the National Bank Stadium on Wednesday, 19 February. The second group match of Pakistan will be against India at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium (DICS) on Sunday, 23 February. The hosts will play their third and final group match at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium in Rawalpindi against Bangladesh on Thursday, 27 February.

Afghanistan, Australia, England and South Africa are placed in Group B. The top two sides from each group will play the semi-finals, with the first semi-final scheduled at the DICS on Tuesday, 4

March. The second semi-final will be staged at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore on 5 March. Both the semi-finals have been allotted reserve days as well.

The final of the marquee event is scheduled on Sunday, 9 March, with the venue, Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium or Dubai's Dubai International Cricket Stadium, to be confirmed closer to the match. 10 March will be the reserve day for the final.

PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi: "We are pleased that an agreement has been reached based on the principles of equality and respect, showcasing the spirit of cooperation and collaboration that defines our sport. "Our heartfelt gratitude goes out to the ICC members who played a constructive role in helping us achieve a mutually beneficial solution. Their efforts have been invaluable in promoting the interests of international cricket.

"Hosting the Champions Trophy is a significant milestone for Pakistan, highlighting our commitment to promoting cricket at the highest level and showcasing our capabilities as a premier event organizer. We are dedicated to ensuring that this tournament will be a memorable experience for players, officials, and fans alike. "Pakistan is elated to welcome the world to the Champions Trophy, and we look forward to extending our renowned hospitality to all."

Envoys present credentials to President

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Ambassadors from Romania, Somalia, Nepal, Japan, and Bangladesh on Tuesday presented their diplomatic credentials to President Asif Ali Zardari during a ceremony held at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

The president received credentials from the Ambassador-designate of Romania, Dan Stoenescu; the Ambassador-designate of Bangladesh, Md. Iqbal Hussain Khan.

Welcoming the envoys, the president congratulated them on their appointments and expressed hope that they would play their role in further strengthening bilateral relations with Pakistan in the areas of trade, economy, and culture.

PTI founder for specific timeframe, says Gohar


F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and the government are in negotiations, with PTI seeking a specific timeframe for resolving its demands, according to Barrister Gohar Ali Khan after a meeting with party's founder Imran Khan.

According to reports, Barrister Gohar briefed Imran Khan on the recent round of talks with the government during his visit to Adiala Jail. According to Gohar, Imran Khan expressed satisfaction with the initiation of dialogue but emphasised the need for a clear timeline for the discussions. "We have always maintained that a timeframe is essential for meaningful negotiations," said Barrister Gohar.

He further asserted that the demands made by PTI founder Imran Khan are legitimate, and that PTI expects progress within a specified timeframe. The PTI leader also confirmed that the party's core committee had discussed the matter and had decided to present a detailed charter of demands to the government in the next round of talks.

Regarding the absence of some key PTI members from the recent meeting, Barrister Gohar clarified that their absence was due to prior commitments, including official engagements and legal matters. "We had already informed the Speaker about the unavailability of these members. However, all members will be present in the next round of talks," he assured.




قائد اعظم
Quaid-e-Azam Day


“You will have to make up for the smallness of your size by your courage and selfless devotion to duty, for it is not life that matters, but the courage, fortitude and determination you bring to it.”

Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah

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25th
December
Quaid-e-Azam Day

On Quaid-e-Azam Day, we honor the foresight and determination of a leader who shaped our nation's destiny. His legacy of commitment to progress, justice, and unity continues to inspire us.

PARCO stands by these values, working to empower Pakistan's growth and resilience. As we fuel the nation's journey forward, we remain dedicated to realizing Quaid-e-Azam's dream of a strong, prosperous, and self-reliant Pakistan.



ARGUS ■

OSPC officially opens in Hyderabad

F.P. Report

HYDERABAD: Ribbon cutting for the launch of the One-Stop Protection Center (OSPC) on 23rd December 2024 in Hyderabad was performed by Additional Chief Secretary Home Department Government of Sindh.

The One-Stop Protection Center (OSPC) provides comprehensive care for Gender Based Violence survivors, offering single-point access to legal, medical, psychological, and social support. This reaffirms Sindh Government's commitment to advancing the OSPC agenda and outlines the envisioned path for strengthening GBV service delivery.

Minister for women development department, Muqaddar Shah Head of UNFPA Sindh, Country Director Pathfinder International Pakistan Ms Madiha Latif, representatives of different government departments, civil society and others were present at the occasion.

Important decisions for Non-Muslim students

LAHORE (APP): Important decisions have been made regarding non-Muslim students for the Matriculation Annual Examinations 2025. The Punjab Textbook Board has issued a letter on Tuesday stating that the alternative paper for the study of the Quran for non-Muslim students has not been prepared so far, due to the syllabus that has not been ready.

According to the policy, the marks obtained by non-Muslim students in the ethics subject will be doubled. Non-Muslim students will be given the ethics paper instead of Islamic studies, because the alternative book for the study of the Quran is not available.

This decision has been taken in the 180th meeting of the Inter Board Coordination Commission (IBCCC), under which no examination of the religious curriculum for non-Muslim students will be conducted.

The Punjab Textbook Board has issued a letter informing all educational institutions of this decision.

CM orders foolproof security arrangements for Christmas

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz on Tuesday has ordered foolproof security arrangements across the province on Christmas.

The CM directed to further improve the security of prayer ceremonies in churches on Christmas and ordered all district administrations and police officers to monitor Christmas arrangements. She emphasized that no lapses in the security of the Christian

Sharjeel promotes relaxed visa policy to attract foreign investments



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon has said that there are vast investment opportunities in the country, as Pakistan is rich in natural mines and minerals.

The government has relaxed the visa policy for foreigners, and the priority of both the federal and Sindh governments is to encourage investment in every sector. Foreign investors must be provided with facilities for business and residence to increase their confidence, so that not only Pakistanis but also international investors invest in Pakistan.

The Sindh government has

also invited international investors for Tharparkar coal, with delegations from many countries, including China, having visited Pakistan. Positive changes have been brought to Pakistan, and further changes must also be made in our attitudes and style of governance.

Speaking to the media at the opening ceremony of the 18th Build Asia Exhibition at Expo Center Karachi, Sindh Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit Sharjeel Inam Memon said that they want the government to provide facilities to the business community, modern technology should be used to

offer services to businesspeople, and a reliable environment must be provided to foreign investors and businesspeople.

He said that steps must be taken to support the business community, and an environment needs to be created to attract investment from abroad. Investors are being provided facilities through SIFC, and if the business community is given these facilities, their confidence will increase.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that Pakistan has many investment opportunities, and the PPP and Sindh government welcome the business community. The priority of both the federal and Sindh governments is to encourage investment in every sector. The government has simplified the visa policy for foreign investors, and more facilities must be created for these investors. He added that SIFC plays an important role in ensuring economic stability in the country.

He said that Pakistan has many investment opportunities, and we can take our products to the international market in a better way. The Sindh government is bringing a big surprise, and the announcement will be made soon.

In response to a question, Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said, "We consider every person living in Sindh as Sindhi. We also consider our Urdu-

speaking brothers as Sindhi, and we ourselves say that they are our Urdu-speaking Sindhis."

In response to another question, Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said, "It is the priority of the federal and Sindh governments to increase investor confidence. Yutong has assured us that it will set up a manufacturing plant in Sindh.

When the plant is established, the people here will get employment. The Sindh government established the Dhabeji Special Economic Zone to promote investment. This is the most modern Special Economic Zone in Pakistan and the only one that is part of CPEC. This is the vision of President Asif Ali Zardari, the creator of CPEC, and under this vision, Pakistan's first Special Economic Zone has been established."

He said that the Sindh government is coming up with a huge mega project, which is the latest project in Pakistan. The PPP government in Sindh is going to start it, and it will be a big surprise. It will also be great news for businesspeople. After this project, Pakistan will enter a new era. In response to another question, Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said, "Riots were organized here to transfer capital out of Sindh.

The Sindh government has controlled other major crimes, including terrorism. We want to create an

environment where business institutions that left can come back. Whether it is Punjab or Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, we have no objection to investment anywhere in Pakistan, but every businessperson believes that, even today, the most suitable places to set up a factory in Pakistan are Karachi, Dhabeji, or Nooriabad. Karachi has a port for exporting anything. Under a conspiracy, business was shifted out of Karachi. With our efforts, investors and businesspeople from all over the world will come to Karachi."

In response to another question, he said, "Yesterday, the government held talks with the opposition in a positive atmosphere. The Pakistan Peoples Party has been saying from day one that the solution to all kinds of contradictions in the world is dialogue. PTI used to say, 'We will talk to him but not to him,' but PTI has now come to the table.

They came late, but they came correctly. In incidents like May 9, we also want those who were complicit in such incidents to face the consequences of their actions. There have been international objections to military courts, but this is an internal matter of Pakistan, and no one needs to interfere in Pakistan's internal affairs. Providing basic facilities is the vision of the PPP.

The Sindh government spent more than one billion dollars on Thar coal, and today electricity

from Thar coal is going to the national grid. We want electricity to be affordable for everyone, and we aim to promote people's businesses. The Sindh government is playing its role in every sector."

In response to another question, Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said, "Some people are sitting at the negotiating table, while others, like Arif Alvi, are engaging in political intrigues. They do not want negotiations to take place, they want their leader to remain in jail, and they want their businesses to continue." In response to another question, Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said, "Heavy traffic in Karachi is a big challenge. I request the license issuers to check these issues before issuing licenses."

After speaking to the media and giving a brief speech at the panel discussion at the Expo Center, Senior Minister of Sindh Sharjeel Inam Memon said, "It is an honor for me to be a part of the panel discussion. From industrialists to laborers, everyone's livelihood is linked to construction work. We want to keep investors stable and safe, and we are also working to bring foreign investment to Pakistan. The law and order situation has improved, and now all kinds of investors can invest in Karachi. I assure you that any problems that arise will be resolved by the Sindh government."

French ambassador highlights robust diplomatic relations with Pakistan

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: French Ambassador to Pakistan Nicolas Gallely has said that Pakistan and France currently have excellent diplomatic and political relations. Economic, trade and diplomatic relations between Pakistan and France will be further promoted. France values Pakistan's efforts for regional peace and stability. Many French companies are investing in Pakistan. Partnership between the private sectors of both countries will be promoted. Undoubtedly, there are excellent opportunities for foreign investment in Pakistan. A large number of Pakistanis are residing in France.

There are vast opportunities and potential for increasing trade volume between the two countries. The resumption of PIA flights is a welcome decision. Bilateral cooperation in the fields of public relations, cultural cooperation, trade



and economics between the two countries is important. A large number of Pakistani students are studying in France. Visa facilities have been increased for Pakistani students.

The establishment of the France-Pakistan Business Forum is important. The establishment of this forum has increased cooperation in the trade sector. He expressed these views. During a meeting with Sardar Zahoore Iqbal, Chairman of France-

Pakistan Business Forum. Sardar Zahoore Iqbal was warmly welcomed by the French Ambassador on his arrival at the French Embassy. On this occasion, the French Ambassador further said that the meetings held between French President Emmanuel Macron and Pakistani Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif in recent days have proven to be very fruitful.

As a result of the recent meetings and consultations between the top leadership

of France and Pakistan, I hope that a new era of cooperation will begin between the two countries. Bilateral relations between the two countries are much better than before. Speaking about the meeting, Sardar Zahoore Iqbal said that a few years ago, there was some deadlock in bilateral political and diplomatic relations between Pakistan and France, but now this deadlock has ended. Contacts and meetings between the top leadership of the two countries will prove to be a roadmap in taking the bilateral relations of the two countries to new heights in the future.

The special efforts of the current Ambassador Nicolas Galey have greatly improved the bilateral relations between the two countries. Pakistani Ambassador to France Asim Iftikhar also played a key role in this regard. The current government has made great efforts to improve relations with

France and in recent times, there have been several high-level contacts between the two governments. Our Prime Minister Mian Shahbaz Sharif has met President Macron three times, which have yielded positive results. Regarding the meeting with the French Ambassador, our President Haji Aslam, Secretary Yasir Khan, and Chief Coordinator Mian Atiq are hopeful. We should play the role of a bridge between Pakistan and France and work to promote relations.

Sardar Zahoore said that big companies have their own way of doing business with regard to investment, but we had discussions with the French Ambassador regarding medium-sized business companies. I suggested that companies of Pakistani nationals in France should be facilitated and they should be helped together with the embassy. The Pakistani embassy and the ministry We should also work together with us and

motivate companies that are doing well to come to Pakistan. Especially in the dairy sector, there is a need to take advantage of high expertise in France.

He said that competition among companies in France is very tough, but if these companies are brought to Pakistan, business can be promoted. These companies have technical expertise as well as machinery. We can take advantage of the opportunities available in Pakistan. We can work with these

companies to produce high-quality dairy products at reasonable prices.

First, we are planning to hold meetings at the level of secretary and minister, then our goal will be for French President Macron to visit Pakistan. This is our target for 2025. He said that I would like to specially thank French Ambassador to Pakistan Nicolas Galli for his full cooperation with us. And the results that will come out of these meetings will be very beneficial for both countries.



PAF BASE, PESHAWAR

TENDER NOTICE : BWO FLT

PAF Base, Peshawar requires different Conservancy items (Surf, Detergent Powder, Dettol, Soaps, Floor Polish, Cleaners, Sprays, Gloves, Mop Bucket, Dustbin, Trolley (for housekeeping) & Liquid etc) for Financial year 2024-25. Last date for submission of tender applications is **09 January, 2025**, at 1000 Hrs. Tenders will be opened on the same day, at 1100 Hrs. Any Tender application maybe rejected on technical grounds.

Note: Quotations may be sent in favour of BWO, PAF Base, Peshawar. Detail specification may be obtained on Tel No: 091-9505031-5037, Mob: 0323-9411312.

Officer Commanding
PAF Base, Peshawar


TENDER NOTICE #01/2024

01. Sealed bids are invited from the firms registered with FBR & other Govt. Departments, for supply of **Medical Consumables & Equipment** on FOR Atomic Energy Cancer Hospital (DINAR), D.I.Khan.

02. Complete/detailed specifications and terms and conditions of the bids are available in tender documents, which will be issued upon written request & provision of NTN/ GST registered firms. The tender documents can be obtained from the office of the undersigned during office timings from **0800 to 1400 hours (Monday to Saturday)** on payment of Rs.500/- being tender fee (non-refundable) in cash or bank draft in the name of Head LAO, DINAR, D.I.Khan.

03. The sealed bids must reach the undersigned on or before **16-01-2025 upto 1130 Hrs**, and will be opened at **1200 Hrs** on same day. The competent authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders.

Incharge Procurement, DINAR
Ph:- 0966-747127



PAF BASE, KOHAT

TENDER NOTICE

1. Pakistan Air Force Base Kohat invites sealed bids from contractors, registered with Income Tax and Sales Tax Departments for purchasing of **Natural Camouflaging items** (Sapling / Seeds, Manure / Fertilizers, maintenance of Animal-drawn Carts, Lawn Mower, Pipes, Buckets, Swards, Hedge Cutter / Scissors, Trimmers, Sprinklers, Polythene Bags, Lime, Flower Pots, Paint, Spraying equipment, Medicine and Peter Pump Ropes etc and Conservancy items (Brooms, Dustbins, Brushes, Mops/Wiper, Cleaning material, Lime, Neel, Coochi, Roller, Toilet Rolls, Drain openers. Acid and Sweep etc).

2. The bids must reach at office of the O i/c Personnel Squadron, PAF Base, Kohat on or before **09 January, 2025** at 1000 hrs. Bids will be opened on the same day at 1200 hrs. The concerned authority reserves the right to accept / reject any / all tenders, on technical grounds. This advertisement is also available at PPRA's website at www.ppra.org.pk.

Officer Incharge Personnel Squadron
PAF Base, Kohat
Tel: 0922-9260092 Ext: 5031
Mobile: 03239452311

OFFICE OF TEHSIL MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION KOHAT

NOTICE INVITING E-BIDDING

Sealed Tenders are invited for the below mentioned works from Government contractors enlisted with Local Council Board, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and KPRA in the relevant category and having registration/enlistment renewal for the current year 2024-25 as per following schedule.

District Development Initiative (DDI) ADP 240320					
S #	Name of Work	E/Cost Cost	Earnest Money	Last Date / Time of submission Forms	Date / Time Tender Opening
1	PCC Streets, Drains, Culverts and Protection Wall	20.0	2%	16-01-2025 12:00 P.M	16-01-2025 2:00 P.M
2	Construction/Rehabilitation/solarization of Masjid and Community at Toor Chapri	10.0	-do-	-do-	-do-
3	PCC Street, drain, solarization of houses and Community Center etc.	9.5	-do-	-do-	-do-
4	Installation/Rehabilitation of Solar Street Lights on various squares and roads of the City at PK-92	15.0	-do-	-do-	-do-

District Development Plan ADP No 210554					
S #	Name of Work	E/Cost Cost	Earnest Money	Last Date / Time of submission Forms	Date / Time Tender Opening
1	PCC Streets and drains at UC Jerma	15.0	2%	16-01-2025 12:00 P.M	16-01-2025 2:00 P.M
2	PCC Streets and drains at UC Surgul	15.0	-do-	-do-	-do-
3	PCC Streets and drains at UC Urban VI	15.0	-do-	-do-	-do-
4	Construction of Community Center (I Mlangan Hujra) UC Tsh 1	3.0	-do-	-do-	-do-
5	PCC Street, drains and culvert at UC Togh 1	7.0	-do-	-do-	-do-
6	PCC Street, drains and culvert at UC Kharmatoo	8.0	-do-	-do-	-do-
7	PCC Street, drains and culvert at Manda Khel, Shadi Khel and Daud Khel	6.0	-do-	-do-	-do-
8	PCC Street, drains and culvert at Village Sheikhhan	5.0	-do-	-do-	-do-
9	PCC Street and drains, culvert and Pressure pump at Bazid Khel	4.0	-do-	-do-	-do-
10	PCC Streets and drains at Sumari	8.0	-do-	-do-	-do-

Local Fund TMA / Saving					
S #	Name of Work	E/Cost Cost	Earnest Money	Last Date / Time of submission Forms	Date / Time Tender Opening
1	Repair and maintenance of Street Lights	5.0	2%	16-01-2025 12:00 P.M	16-01-2025 2:00 P.M
2	Repair and Maintenance of Civil work	5.0	-do-	-do-	-do-
3	Exigent work of the project Ahmad Faraz Public Park Jerma Kohat	4.0	-do-	-do-	-do-
4	Construction/Installation of Stairs etc at Roof Top Restaurant Tehsil Plaza Kohat	5.0	-do-	-do-	-do-

TERMS AND CONDITIONS: 1. Tender form along with BOQ and instructions to bidders etc may be downloaded on Local Government Website ebidding.lcbkp.gov.pk and KPRA (www.kpra.gov.pk) after publishing in the newspapers. 2. As per Clause 37(A) of KPRA Rules, all bidders must be registered with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority. 3. All bids must be accompanied by a bid security in shape of call deposit equal to 2% of the estimated cost in the name of TMO, TMA Kohat call deposit of scheduled banks shall be a acceptance. Document like e enlistment copy of Local Council board, KPK and photo copy of CNIC and NTN must be attached with tender form. 4. Scaled bids must be sent through Registered Mail/Couriers Services. 5. The tender shall be processed according to Above/below system" based on the Market Rate System 2024. 6. The contractors quoting their bids up to a limit of 10% below Engineer estimate shall submit bid security 2% only of Engineering Estimate. 7. The contractors quoting their bids more than 10% below upto 20% below on Engineers Estimate shall submit along with their bids 8% Additional Security of Engineers Estimated cost in addition to 2% bid security, if the bid is not accompanied with the required amount of additional security, then it will be considered as non-responsive and the 2% bid security shall be forfeited in favour of Government and the second lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly. 8. Similarly, a contractor quoting bid more than 20% below shall submit with his bid an additional security on Engineers Estimated cost equal to the differential amount of submitted bid and Engineers Estimate along with detailed rate analysis. In case of more than 20% below bids, if the bid is not accompanied by the detailed rate analysis and for required amount of additional security, then the said bid shall be considered as non-responsive. All the securities submitted along with such non responsive bid shall be forfeited in favour of Government and the 2nd lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly. 9. In case detailed rate analysis submitted with the bids is, in view of the procuring entity, not convincing the head of Procuring Entity may declare such bid as non-responsive without forfeiture of bid securities and record reasons thereof. 10. The procuring entity may offer the contract to next lowest bidder after due diligence in the context of financial difference between such two bids or may advertise procurement opportunity afresh. 11. Work order will be issued on the availability of funds. 12. Any addition made in term and conditions in the NIT advertised in the newspaper will be implemented as per KPRA Rules. 13. If the evaluated electronic bid costs of two or more bidders are equal then the successful bidder will be declared through open draw. 14. Open draw will be conducted after verification of CDRs from banks. 15. All Federal and provincial duties / stamp duty and taxes including sales tax will be recoverable as per directives of the government issued from time to time.

Tehsil Office (I)
TMA Kohat

IN(P) 3495 / 24

Tehsil Municipal Officer
TMA Kohat

Commissioner visits different areas to assess people's issues

KARACHI (APP): Commissioner Syed Hassan Naqvi, visited various areas of Korangi and Malir districts on Tuesday to assess issues related to water scarcity, lack of cleanliness, and encroachments and sewage problems.

According to spokesman, during his visit, Commissioner was accompanied by Managing Director of Water and Sewerage Corporation, Syed Salahuddin Ahmed, Deputy Commissioners of Korangi and Malir, Masood Bhutto and Saleemullah Odho, Director Planning and Development of Commissioner office Naseem Bhutto and other senior officials.

The Commissioner reviewed the water supply arrangements at Korangi's 5.5 number and Ali Akbar Shah pumping station/ filter plant at Ibrahim Hyderi. He received a detailed briefing from the Deputy Commissioners of Korangi and Malir regarding the water supply situation in their respective districts. It was informed to the commissioner that load shedding at the Korangi 5.5 number water pumping station has hindered efforts to supply water to various areas of Korangi and Landhi.

Commissioner Syed Hassan Naqvi, directed the Water Corporation to take priority measures to improve water supply at

two pumping stations. He instructed the deputy commissioner Korangi to coordinate with K-Electric to eliminate load shedding and ensure a stable power supply during the required times preferably from 12.00 to 3.00 pm, which would help improve water distribution. Commissioner visited various areas, including Nasir Colony and stressed the need to improve the cleanliness system at public places. He emphasized that the government aims to improve the city's cleanliness and directed the Solid Waste Management Board to focus on peripheral areas.

The Commissioner noted the lack of cleanliness and sanitation in various areas, including the presence of garbage dumps in public places. He was informed that over 2,000 factories are operating in the area, with some dumping waste illegally at public places. The Solid Waste Management Board was instructed to identify and warn these factories to cease illegal dumping. The Commissioner also took notice of the poor condition of storm water drains in areas like Bilal Colony and Korangi 2.5. Deputy Commissioner Korangi was directed to work with the KMC and relevant agencies to clean up clogged storm water drains.

KP medalists of Quaid-e-Azam Games honoured

Fakhar distributes cash prizes worth of Rs4.2m

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A special ceremony was held on Tuesday, at the Sports Arena of Peshawar Sports Complex to honor the medal-winning athletes and officials of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for their outstanding performance in the Quaid-e-Azam Games.

During the event gold medalists were awarded PKR 50,000 each, silver medalists PKR 30,000, and bronze medalists PKR 20,000.

In team events, PKR 100,000 was given for gold medals, PKR 50,000 for silver medals and PKR 30,000 for bronze medals.

The chief guest Provincial Minister for Sports Syed Fakhar Jihan distributed cash prizes totaling PKR 4.2 million

among the athletes who brought pride to the province. He was accompanied by President Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Olympic Association Syed Aqil Shah, Chief de Mission Quaid-e-Azam Games and DG Sports Abdul Nasir Khan, Deputy Chief de Mission Ilyas Afridi, Secretary of the Contingent and Director Operations Sports Naimatullah Marwat, Deputy Director Sports Operations Jamshed Baloch, senior officials of the Sports Department and representatives of the Olympic Association.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa delivered an exceptional performance in the Quaid-e-Azam Games, securing second place with a total of 98 medals including 29 gold, 31 silver and 38

bronze. In athletics the province won six gold, five silver and seven bronze medals (18 in total). Karate players bagged four gold, seven silver, and five bronze medals (16 in total). In judo athletes won seven gold, two silver and seven bronze medals.

Taekwondo players secured five gold, one silver and three bronze medals (9 in total). In badminton Khyber Pakhtunkhwa claimed three gold and one bronze medal while squash players earned two gold, one silver, and two bronze medals.

The men's teams clinched first positions in volleyball and kabaddi while they ranked second in football and hockey.

In wrestling the province won six silver and two bronze medals, table tennis players secured four silver and three bronze medals and weightlifting added one silver and two bronze medals to the tally. Boxers claimed one silver and two bronze medals while swimmers earned three bronze medals.

This initiative by the government aims to recognize the athletes' achievements and encourage them to attain further success in the future. Under the leadership of Provincial Minister for Sports Syed Fakhar Jahan, the provincial government is committed to promoting sports development and providing athletes with the best opportunities to compete at the international level.



PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister for Sports Syed Fakhar Jihan in a group photo with the players who won medals during recently concluded Quaid-e-Azam Games.

CJ awarded certificates of appreciation to judicial officers

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Chief Justice of Peshawar High Court (PHC) distributed certificates of appreciation among judicial officers across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for their performance during dissemination of justice, on Monday.

According to details, the

ceremony was attended by Chief Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim, Ijaz Anwar, the Senior Puisne Judge, Judge(s) of the Administration Committee, Ikhtiar Khan, the Registrar, Mamrez Khan Khalil, Addl. Registrar (Admn) and all principal officers of the Peshawar High Court.

The ceremony was held to honor the outstanding

performance of Judicial Officers (including District & Sessions Judge, Addl. District & Sessions Judge, Senior Civil Judges and Civil Judges) of the District Judiciary. For the purpose, total 81 Judicial Officers were selected based on their performance and were presented appreciation certificate by the Hon'ble Chief Justice.

The Chief Justice while concluding the ceremony highly appreciated performance of the District Judiciary in particular and the high performing Judicial Officers in general. His lordship emphasized that High Court will extend all out support to the Judicial Officer and will always look after the well being of Judicial Officers.

Tordher distributes certificates, toolkits



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Industries and Commerce Abdul Karim Tordher was the chief guest in the ceremony. In the graduation ceremony 71 graduates, received trainings certificates and training toolkits in trades of mobile repairing, building electrician and plumbing.

Under a project with support of the Embassy of the Netherlands and Implemented by Sarhad Rural Support Programme

SRSP, in the event the graduates from Peshawar, Nowshera, Swabi and Haripur, total 34 host students and 37 Afghan students received their completion certificates.

The chief guest, Special Assistant to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Industries and Commerce Abdul Karim Tordher distributed certificates and toolkits among the qualified trainees and congratulated them upon completion of the same training.

He commended SRSP and its leadership, particularly CEO Masood Ul

Mulk, for their dedication to rural development and economic empowerment. The Special Assistant emphasized the importance of adopting international certifications to align with global standards.

He highlighted the KP government's initiatives, including interest-free loans provided by the Akhuwat Foundation for male entrepreneurs. He also expressed regarding loans, ranging from PKR 100,000 to 500,000, are aimed at supporting woman entrepreneurs through the Social Welfare Department.

Quaid had a special place in his hear for youth: CS

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Nadeem Aslam Chaudhary on the occasion of December 25 said that the day marks the birth anniversary of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, an occasion that inspires us to revisit and reflect upon the vision of the founder of Pakistan. It is an opportunity to realign our national direction with the values he espoused and celebrate his remarkable leadership with dignity.

He said that Quaid-e-Azam had a special place in his heart for the youth, especially students, whom he considered the torch-bearers of any nation's progress. Pakistan is blessed with a youth population that is rich in potential, intellect, and character, making them the country's greatest asset.

The Chief Secretary said that the Quaid's deep admiration for the youth of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was evident through his connection with Islamia College Peshawar and his recognition of their talent. He saw a bright future for Pakistan in the hands of educated youth and emphasized, "Without education, all is darkness; seek the light of education." I urge our youth to live by these words, prioritize education, and equip themselves with the knowledge necessary to lead Pakistan towards prosperity. He said faith, unity, and discipline—Quaid-e-Azam's guiding principles—are the foundation for national development.

KP govt disburses Rs.30.3bn for Sehat Card Program: Muzzammil

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Finance and Inter-Provincial Coordination Mr Muzzammil Aslam, has announced that the provincial government has disbursed a record Rs. 30.3 billion for the Sehat Card program from March 2024

to December 24, 2024. This significant allocation demonstrates the government's commitment to provide quality healthcare to its citizens.

According to Mr. Aslam, the caretaker government had previously suspended the Sehat Card program due to a lack of funds. However, the current government has not

only revived the program but has also made a record payment in just nine months. Mr. Aslam attributed Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's success in the health sector to the vision of PTI founder Imran Khan and the leadership of Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur.

The Sehat Card program has been a game-changer

for the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, providing free medical treatment to eligible citizens, with a coverage limit of up to Rs. One million per family. With this significant investment, the government has reaffirmed its commitment to ensure that every citizen has access to quality healthcare, Advisor on Finance added.

Gul-e-Dawoodi exhibition starts in Islamia College Peshawar

PESHAWAR (APP): The Gul e Dawoodi exhibition has started in Islamia College Peshawar, attracting flower lovers in droves.

The captivating fragrance and vibrant colours of Gul e Dawoodi (Chrysanthemum) proved a refreshing touch to the College's historic charm during winter.

The impressive event, organized by the Department of Horticulture of the College, features a stunning array of 30 varieties of Gul e Dawoodi, alongside French and African varieties of Gul e Sadburg (Marigold)

brought joy on faces of Peshawarites. The exhibition would continue till December 31, 2024, said the spokesman of the College.

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

Gul e Dawoodi is a winter season flowering plant with extra ordinary big flowers on two feet long stems. The different vibrant colours of gigantic flowers make Gul e Dawoodi one of

the most demanded seasonal flowering plant of winter.

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

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

Among the visitors at the exhibition was Nasir Khan, a property dealer from Wapda Town said "Gul e Dawoodi is my favorite

winter flower, and I came all the way from Nowshera to see its different varieties on display at this exhibition."

The exhibition's vibrant colours and soothing fragrances bring joy and energy to the cold winter days. Nasir said that since his childhood he was coming to ICP for its exhibitions and planted its varieties at home.

The visitors said that such an impressive flowers exhibition was a great blessing for people, and thanked the college administration for organizing a successful exhibition.

Quaid-e-Azam: The indomitable spirit driving Pakistan Air Force legacy

Izmi Herlani

QUAID-E-AZAM Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the esteemed architect of Pakistan, stands as an enduring beacon of hope and resolute determination. As the nation commemorates his birthday on 25 December, it reflects on his bold declaration that Muslims were not merely a minority but a distinct nation deserving of their own homeland. His impactful assertion, "India is not a nation; it is a subcontinent composed of nationalities," illuminated the profound differences among communities and laid the foundation for the Two Nation Theory.

Through tireless negotiations with both British authorities and the Indian National Congress, Quaid transformed this theory into a political reality, culminating in the birth of Pakistan on 14 August 1947. Revered for his unwavering commitment to democracy, freedom and social justice, he also recognised the vital importance of military strength in safeguarding the nascent nation. His strong belief, "There is no power on Earth that can undo Pakistan," continues to resonate across generations, inspiring resilience and unity in the face of adversity.

Quaid's ideology and vision are not merely guiding principles; they are a lighthouse of aspiration that lights our path towards becoming a truly great nation. His conviction in unity, faith and discipline reverberates deeply within our hearts, reminding us of the strength we possess when we stand together. In a world fraught with challenges, Quaid astutely recognised the vital role of Air Power in securing the future of our fledgling nation, understanding that it was not just about military might but about safeguarding our very sovereignty. With fierce determination, he championed the establishment of Pakistan Air Force in 1947, a bold testament to his visionary leadership and an indelible mark on our national identity.

Today, Pakistan Air Force stands as a proud embodiment of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's vision and the indomitable spirit of Pakistan. With its head held high, PAF soars with purpose and determination. Quaid's resonant words "A country without a strong Air Force is at the mercy of any aggressor. Pakistan must build up her Air Force as quickly as possible. It must be an efficient Air Force, SECOND TO NONE" continue to echo, motivating our Shaheens to perform their



duties with utmost dedication. These words serve as a cornerstone of persistence, upholding his legacy while safeguarding national interests which has been the driving force behind PAF's evolution into the formidable guardian of Pakistan's skies. As it evolves into a Next Generation Air Force, PAF draws strength from its rich history and the lessons learned from past challenges.

Quaid-e-Azam was an exceptional leader whose exemplary conduct set a powerful precedent for others to follow, inspiring those around him to unite towards a common goal and establishing himself as a lasting source of

motivation for leaders worldwide. His visionary ideals for Pakistan Air Force were firmly anchored in an unrelenting dedication to professionalism, integrity and an unyielding sense of duty. Quaid famously proclaimed, "With faith, discipline and selfless devotion to duty, there is nothing worthwhile that you cannot achieve," a statement that encapsulates his profound belief in the immense potential of personnel at large and illuminates the path to greatness through dedication and hard work.

In a bold move, leadership of Pakistan Air Force has been pivotal in steering PAF towards a trans-

formative journey of self-reliance and indigenisation, in the last three years, empowering its personnel to confront challenges with courage and perseverance. Motivated by Quaid-e-Azam's exhortation that "I charge you to remember that only with discipline and self-reliance can Pakistan Air Force be worthy of Pakistan," the present leadership of PAF has actively catalysed significant advancements in technology and operational capabilities. At the forefront of this visionary initiative is the National Aerospace Science and Technology Park (NASTP), a ground-breaking endeavour that bridges

the divide between academia and industry while diminishing reliance on foreign suppliers. NASTP is not just a hub for innovation; it is a dynamic ecosystem that nurtures research and development across vital sectors, including aviation, space, information technology and cyber technologies. By spearheading advancements through its Software Development House and fostering local talent, NASTP empowers start-ups and SMEs to thrive. Furthermore, it plays a crucial role in a comprehensive modernisation drive that integrates cutting-edge technologies like artificial intelligence and machine learning,

positioning Pakistan to tackle contemporary challenges head-on. With NASTP facilitating the creation of pioneering products and services, PAF stands poised to transform strategic foresight into unmatched operational prowess, driving forward a vision where innovation and modernisation converge to herald a new era of technological advancement and sustainable economic growth.

Quaid-e-Azam expressed profound reverence for the martyrs of Pakistan, stating, "The sacrifices of our martyrs are the foundation of our freedom. We must always remember their courage and dedication, for they laid down their lives for our future" emphasising the essential role their courage and dedication played in shaping the nation's identity and progress.

This sentiment profoundly reflects the legacies of valiant figures of the 1965 and 1971 wars such as Squadron Leader Sarfaraz Rafiqui, Pilot Officer Rashid Minhas and many more, who displayed extraordinary bravery and selflessness in defending the homeland. Each of PAF heroes epitomized the qualities of unity and devotion that underpin the remarkable achievements of Pakistan Air Force. Quaid urged

the nation to honour their legacy by upholding the values for which they fought, reminding us that these martyrs stand as enduring symbols of courage and sacrifice, inspiring generations to safeguard our skies and sovereignty.

Quaid-e-Azam's influence on Pakistan is both profound and enduring. He not only forged the nation from struggle but also instilled values of democracy, equality and justice that resonate today. As the guiding light for future generations, his ideals serve as a moral compass, inspiring the people of Pakistan to honour his legacy and strive for a brighter, more prosperous future. His vision for Pakistan Air Force as a formidable and unparalleled fighting force underscores his understanding of the crucial role Air Power plays in modern warfare and national defence. His foresight in establishing a strong, independent Air Force not only aimed to safeguard Pakistan's sovereignty but also to instill a sense of pride and resilience in its people. By emphasising professionalism, innovation and a commitment to excellence, Quaid-e-Azam laid the foundation for an Air Force that continues to evolve and adapt, ensuring that it remains SECOND TO NONE in all aspects.



In brief

Drive against encroachments F.P. Report

LARKANA: An operation was launched in Naudero to remove illegal encroachments on the main roads of the city. The operation saw the removal of illegal encroachments on both sides of the road in various areas of the city including Zulfiqar Gate, Kallar Chowk, Allah Waro Chowk, Larkana Road and other areas. During the operation launched to remove the encroachments, shopkeepers and hotels removed the benches, sandals, chicken cages and spines lying on the road and took the goods into their custody. During the operation against illegal encroachments, Assistant Commissioner Ratodero was accompanied by DSP, Municipal Admin Officer, and other staff. Speaking to the media on this occasion, Assistant Commissioner Ratodero said that under the government order, we are eliminating illegal encroachments on the city roads without any discrimination.

Smog eradication top priority F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: According to details Sakina Hospital Kamalia Chief Executive, Assistant Professor Dr. Shahid Iqbal Gill said that by smoking a person suffers from suitable diseases like heart and lungs so people should avoid smoking to be safe from diseases. He further said that nowadays our young generation is very addicted to smoking due to which people are getting heart attack problems. I request parents to take care of their children so that they don't get addicted to smoking. In the End, Dr. Shahid Gill said that the government should also ban cigarettes so that our young generation can be safe.

Vigilance body holds meeting F.P. Report

KOHAT: Deputy Commissioner Kohat, Abdul Karim here Tuesday chaired a meeting of District Vigilance Committee. The meeting among others was attended by District Social Welfare Officer, Assistant Director Labor, Public Prosecutor Assistant Director Afghan Refugees and concerned officials. Chairing the meeting, Deputy Commissioner reviewed the prevention of forced labor and human trafficking of minors. He also urged masses to inform authorities about child labor and human trafficking. The meeting also adopted a plan of action devised by concerned departments for identification of elements involved in child labor.

Security approved

BAHAWALPUR (INP): Over 1,000 police personnel and volunteers will be deployed across the district to ensure security during Christmas celebrations. According to a spokesperson, a security plan for Christmas was approved during a meeting chaired by District Police Officer (DPO) Asad Sarfaraz Khan. The plan will cover 45 events and ceremonies scheduled in the district. He highlighted that personnel from the District Police, Elite Force, Dolphin Force, Traffic Police, Mahafiz Squad, and lady police will be on duty to maintain security. Sub-Divisional Police Officers and Station House Officers were instructed to implement the plan thoroughly. Key security measures include the installation of CCTV cameras, walk through gates, and other technical equipment at churches.

Crackdown against land Mafia intensifies in Hangu

Syed Adnan

HANGU: In a determined effort to curb illegal activities and safeguard public and state property, Deputy Commissioner Hangu, Gohar Zaman Wazir, has announced an intensified crackdown against various mafias operating in the district. He warned that any one found attempting to seize government or private land will face strict legal action, along with public exposure through the display of their photographs in

police stations and other public offices.

The Deputy Commissioner revealed that decisive measures would target organized groups, including land mafias, timber mafias, loan sharks, and drug mafias. He has directed all Assistant Commissioners and Police officers to prepare detailed personal files on the ring-leaders and key operatives involved in these illicit activities.

These files, based on intelligence reports from

secret agencies, will document profiles, criminal histories, past convictions, and records of public complaints against the suspects. The initiative aims to dismantle these organized networks and restore public trust by ensuring the safety and rights of citizens. DC Gohar Zaman Wazir reiterated the administration's commitment to rooting out these illegal elements and urged the public to cooperate by reporting any suspicious activities in their areas.

College students hold daylong exhibition

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: A one-day science exhibition was organized at Government Postgraduate College Timergara in collaboration with the district youth affairs department for the students of 16 government colleges of Lower and Upper Dir here on Tuesday.

The Additional Deputy Commissioner Bashir Khan, Regional Director colleges Inayatullah, Secretary Malakand Education Board Professor Ghulam Zahid Jan, District Youth Officer Malik Shahzad Tariq, principals of the colleges, teachers and students participated in the exhibition.

Malakand Region Director Inayatullah and Additional Deputy Commissioner Lower Dir Bashir Khan formally inaugurated the exhibition by cutting the ribbon. In the exhibition, students from both Upper and Lower Dir districts not only amazed the audience by presenting amazing models of arts and science, but also filled the exhibition with exhibits of regional culture.



The efforts of the students were highly appreciated by the audience and observers. The position holders and students who performed brilliantly in the exhibition were also awarded honorary shields. Addressing the prize distribution ceremony, Regional Director Colleges Inayatullah and Principal of Postgraduate College Timergara, Professor Dr. Saeedullah Jan said that in order to meet the demands and challenges of the modern era, it is necessary to provide such opportunities to the students in which they can not only demonstrate their abilities theoretically but also test their abilities practically. He said that there is no shortage of talent among our students

because this soil is very fertile, but there is a need to provide these students with appropriate opportunities so that they can showcase their talents.

He said that the purpose of this scientific exhibition was to encourage students and make the world aware of their talents so that the world can see that our young generation is skilled. He said that the children created various models in the exhibition keeping in mind the needs of the modern era, which is commendable.

The students present on the occasion said that such an exhibition should be held every year so that they can get an opportunity to demonstrate their talents in practice.



HYDERABAD: Contract employees of Malakhra ground Bhitshah holding a protest for restoration of their service.

Old rivalry claims another life near Shikarpur

F.P. Report

SHIKARPUR: A violent clash between two rival factions of the Kalar community claimed the life of a young man within the jurisdiction of Sultankot Police Station near Shikarpur on Tuesday.

According to a police report, the clash occurred over a long-standing feud between the Deen Muhammad Kalar and Ratto Kalar groups near the Sultankot link road resulting in death of Pahlwan Kalar, aged 30, son of Sikandar Ali Kalar, while another person, Imamdeen

Kalar, sustained injuries.

The assailants fled the scene following the incident. The police have identified the motive behind the killing as the ongoing enmity between the two groups. The victim's body was shifted to a local hospital for medico-legal formalities.

This latest clash brought the death toll from the ongoing feud to 10 lives. No FIR could be registered till filing this report. Tension gripped the area soon after the incident and more bloodshed is feared.

Teenage boy electrocuted to death: A teenage boy

was electrocuted to death in village Khan Muhammad near Shikarpur on Tuesday. According to a police report, Rajab Ali, aged 18, son of Majan Mirbahar, received severe electric shocks while operating a boring machine at a crop field in village Khan Muhammad and fell unconscious. His relatives rushed him to the Civil Hospital Shikarpur for treatment, where he breathed his last due to severe electric shocks. When his body was brought to his home, a wave of grief hit his family and the entire neighborhood.

GHAB strike enters 29th day

F.P. Report

QUETTA: The token strike by the Grand Healan Alliance Balochistan (GHAB) continued for the 29th consecutive day on Tuesday, paralyzing outpatient department (OPD) services in government hospitals and compounding hardships for patients, particularly from remote areas of the province.

Hospitals affected include Sandeman Provincial Hospital, Bolan Medical Complex Hospital,

Shaikh Zayed Hospital, and Helpers Eye Hospital in Quetta. The alliance has been staging a daily three-hour protest, demanding the withdrawal of decisions to privatize public hospitals and appoint staff in the provincial health department on a contractual basis.

"We will continue our protest until our demands are met," said GHAB spokesperson Dr Saboor. The alliance has also boycotted the ongoing polio vaccination campaign, exacerbating health con-

cerns in the province. Patients from far-flung areas have been hit hardest, with many expressing frustration over the unavailability of timely medical assistance.

Despite growing pressure, the authorities are yet to respond to GHAB's demands, leaving the deadlock unresolved. The strike has highlighted the strain on the province's healthcare system, with stakeholders urging a swift resolution to avert a further crisis.



QUETTA: Vendors sitting around the fire to warm themselves during cold weather.

Police issue safety advisory for tourists visiting Galyat F.P. Report

ABBOTTABAD: District Police Chief Abbottabad Umar Tufail on Tuesday has instructed the district police to actively assist and guide tourists traveling to Abbottabad and Galyat during the winter season.

The police have urged travelers to avoid unnecessary journeys and ensure their vehicles are mechanically fit. To prevent accidents on icy roads, the use of tire chains is recommended. Drivers are advised to exercise caution by minimizing the use of brakes, maintaining slow speeds, and driving in lower gears.

Tourists have also been cautioned to handle heaters in vehicles and hotels with care to avoid any hazards. Authorities recommend carrying essential supplies, including food, warm clothing, extra fuel, and a mechanical toolkit. For pedestrians, the police advise walking cautiously and using support when necessary.

Furthermore, visitors are urged to stay vigilant against landslides during snowfall and avoid traveling at night for their safety. The Abbottabad Police have reaffirmed their commitment to serving and assisting the public. Tourists can contact them for help in case of emergencies at 09929310033 or 0992341785.

AJK govt to prepare safe drinking water policy F.P. Report

MUZAFFARABAD: The Department of Local Government and Rural Development of the Azad Government of Jammu and Kashmir, in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Climate Change and UNICEF here organized a workshop regarding the preparation of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir safe drinking water policy.

During the workshop, the draft of the policy was presented and suggestions were taken from the participants. The workshop was attended by Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, Minister of Local Government and Rural Development of Azad Kashmir, Special Assistant to the Government of Azad Kashmir for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Mrs. Nabeela Ayub, Members of the Assembly Sardar Hassan Ibrahim and Chaudhry Muhammad Rafiq Nair, Senior Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Climate Change, Muhammad Farooq Khan, Secretary of Local Government and Rural Development Shahid Ayub, Secretary of Environment Amir Mehmood Mirza, Director General of Local Government Raja Fayaz, officials from the Ministry of Climate Change and representatives of UNICEF.

An official from the Ministry of Climate Change, Niazullah Khan, briefed the participants about the damages caused by climate change, particularly the lack of access to clean water.

Quaid-e-Azam: A great leader and founder

Muhammad Shahbaz Ansari

QUAID-E-AZAM Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, was a visionary leader whose tireless efforts and extraordinary leadership turned the dream of Pakistan into a reality. His sacrifices and principles paved the way for the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent to strive for an independent homeland.

Every year, December 25th is celebrated with national zeal as his birthday. This day is not only an opportunity to pay tribute to his remarkable personality but also a reminder for the nation to reflect on his ideals and objectives. Muhammad Ali Jinnah was born on December 25, 1876, in Karachi. He received his early education in Karachi and Bombay before proceeding to London for legal studies.

Successfully completing his law degree, he returned to India and displayed exceptional skills in the legal profession. Quaid-e-Azam began his political career in the Indian National Congress but soon realized that the Congress was incapable of safeguarding the interests of Muslims. To protect their rights and autonomy, he joined the All India Muslim League.

This decision reflected his vision and determination to improve the plight of Muslims in the subcontinent. He clearly articulated the Two-Nation Theory, which stated that Muslims and Hindus were two distinct nations with separate cultures, religions, customs, and ways of life. Based on this theory, he demanded a separate homeland where Muslims could live according to Islamic principles.

Under his leadership, the Pakistan Movement achieved remarkable success. His relentless struggle, guidance of the

masses, and unwavering efforts against the British government and Congress culminated in the creation of Pakistan on August 14, 1947. The most striking feature of Quaid-e-Azam's personality was his adherence to principles.

His three guiding principles, "Unity, Faith, and Discipline," remain a beacon of hope for Pakistan. He consistently emphasized honesty, rule of law, and hard work as the keys to success. In his speeches, Jinnah often stressed the need to build Pakistan as a state founded on Islamic principles, where minorities would enjoy full protection. For him, democracy, justice, and equality were the bedrock of Pakistan's foundation. 25th December is not just a day to celebrate Jinnah's birth but also an occasion to renew our commitment to his principles and vision.

It serves as a reminder of his greatness and the sacrifices he made, enabling us to live in an independent country. Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah envisioned a strong, progressive, and prosperous Pakistan. Today, it is our responsibility to turn his dream into reality by upholding the principles of honesty, unity, and justice. The life of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah is an inspiration for all, encouraging us to work with perseverance and dedication toward achieving our goals.

December 25 gives us the opportunity to reflect on his principles, strive to turn his vision into reality, and accelerate our efforts to place Pakistan on the path of progress. This day reminds us that by following Jinnah's principles, we can elevate Pakistan to a distinguished position on the global stage.

The writer working as District Information Officer, Toba Tek Singh, Punjab, Pakistan.

KP govt okays Rs600m for developments in Buner

F.P. Report

BUNER: District Development Advisory Committee (DDAC) Buner Abdul Kabir Khan Advocate has confirmed approval of Rs600 million developmental fund for upgradation of Buner's infrastructure, on Monday.

This claimed while chairing a meeting at his office and claimed that 600 million has been approved to be spent equally across the district. Chairman DDAC has further informed that the heads of all the departments present

in the meeting have been instructed to get the projects indicated by the respective MNA and MFAs and submit the PC-1 by the last date of this month so that work can be started on the development projects for the convenience of the people.

DDAC meeting was held under the chairmanship of Abdul Kabir Khan Advocate in DDAC Office Hall Daggar on Tuesday. Deputy Commissioner Kashif Qayum Khan, ADC Finance Fazal Wahid and

heads of all departments and tehsil municipal officers participated.

In the meeting, ADC Finance presented the guidelines on behalf of the provincial government. In the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner clarified that each department will do its work according to the guidelines of the provincial government and hoped that the elected members will follow the policy of transparency in the use of funds so that more and more people can benefit from the development funds.

Admn extends Christmas greetings to Christians

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Deputy Commissioner Mardan Wazir and Chairman Board of Directors (BoD) Water and Sanitation Services Company Mardan (WSSCM), extends greetings of the Christmas to the Christian community.

They appreciated the role of Christian community in making Mardan a clean and environment friendly city. While addressing the event organized regarding the

Christian community's religious festival Christmas.

DC Dr. Azmatullah Wazir said the Christian community performing their duties well for the prosperity and development of Mardan. CEO WSSCM Shahid Khan said that company has already releases salaries of the Christian community and company has also given two days leave. He congratulated the Christian community on the occasion of Christmas and assured

them full support.

DC Mardan, Chairman BoD along with Christian community cut the Christmas cake. Additional Deputy Commissioner Finance and Planning Fahad Iftikhar, BoD member Javed Hussain, Chief Financial Officer Naveed Akhtar, Manager HR & Admin Rahatullah, Manager Municipal Services Muhammad Ishaq, PS to DC Mardan Ihsan and other were also present on this occasion.

PTI leader forcibly restores electricity in Nowshera

Syed Waliullah Shah

NOWSHERA: PTI lawmaker's Haji Zar Alam Khan stormed the Peshawar Electric Supply Company's (PESCO) power grid station in Nowshera's Khyber region, forcibly restoring electricity supply to the area. The region had been experiencing prolonged and unannounced power outages, last-

ing up to 12 hours.

Speaking to the media, MPA Haji Zar Alam Khan said that PESCO officials and authorities had made life miserable for the people of Nowshera through their unjustified and unannounced power outages and self-imposed work permits. He warned that if PESCO officials and authorities continued to exceed scheduled

power outages or imposed self-made work permits, PTI would be forced to take control of the grid station.

The people of Nowshera have been facing severe electricity shortages, with power outages lasting up to 12 hours. PESCO officials and authorities have been imposing self-made work permits, which has exacerbated the electricity crisis in the region.



Ukrainian drones hit a Russian fuel depot

KYIV, Ukraine (AP): Ukrainian drones struck a major Russian fuel depot for the second time in just over a week, according to a senior Russian regional official, as part of a "massive" cross-border attack on fuel and energy facilities that Kyiv says supply Moscow's military.

The strikes came days after Russia launched sweeping attacks on Ukraine's already battered energy grid, threatening to plunge thousands of homes into darkness as winter tightens its grip over the region, and as Russia's all-out invasion of its neighbor nears the three-year mark. A fire broke out at the Stalnoy Kon oil terminal in Russia's southern Oryol region, local Gov. Andrey Klychkov said in a post on the Telegram messaging app, adding Russian forces downed 20 drones targeting "fuel and energy infrastructure" in the province. Russian independent news outlet Astra shared video of what it said was an explosion at the site, showing a massive orange blaze lighting up the night sky. While the clip could not be independently verified, it was later shared by a Ukrainian security official who described it as footage from Oryol. The official, Andriy Kovalenko of the Council of National Security and Defense, claimed the Oryol fuel depot supplies Russian forces fighting in Ukraine and southern Russia, including the Kursk province where Ukrainian troops have dug in following a lightning incursion in August. According to

Klychkov, the Russian local governor, the fire was extinguished hours later and did not cause casualties or "significant" damage.

Ukraine's military previously claimed to have struck the Stalnoy Kon terminal with drones on Dec. 14, causing a "powerful" blaze. Other key war-related developments from Ukraine and Russia: - Russian President Vladimir Putin vowed retaliation after Ukrainian drones the day before struck residential buildings in the city of Kazan, in the Tatarstan region over 600 miles (1,000 kilometers) from the front line. Speaking to Tatarstan's regional governor, Rustam Minnikhanov, Putin asserted that anyone attacking Russia has to reckon with Moscow inflicting "many times greater damage" in return, but did not elaborate. His remarks were carried by Russian state news agencies. Minnikhanov's press service said that eight drones attacked Kazan. Local authorities said there were no casualties. A 30-year-old man died on the spot in Ukraine's southern Kherson region after a Russian drone dropped explosives nearby, local Gov. Oleksandr Prokudin reported. Hours earlier, Prokudin said that two other civilians died as a result of Russian drone strikes on the province. A man in his late 40s suffered fatal injuries from a drone blast, and a woman was found dead under rubble after another drone slammed into her house. In the Kharkiv region in the northeast, a

Russian drone strike severely injured a 56-year-old man as he walked down a road in the city of Kupiansk, local Gov. Oleh Syniehubov reported. He said the man would need to have at least one limb amputated as a result, but gave no further detail. In the Kyiv suburb of Brovary, debris from a Russian drone sparked a fire on the roof of a 25-story tower block, according to regional Gov. Ruslan Kravchenko. There were no immediate reports of any casualties. According to Ukraine's Air Force, Russia launched 103 Iranian-made Shahed drones at its neighbor overnight. Ukrainian air defense shot down 52 of the drones while another 44 failed to reach their targets, the force said in a statement, in a likely reference to electronic jamming. Meanwhile, Russia's Defense Ministry said that its forces had intercepted 42 Ukrainian drones launched overnight at Russian territory. According to the ministry, 20 of those were over the Oryol region, where the local governor said a blaze tore through the oil terminal.

Separately, Russian forces have continued grinding forward in Ukraine's northeast, in addition to eking out gains near the eastern town of Kurakhove. Russia's Defense Ministry reported that its troops had captured two northeastern settlements: Lozova in the Kharkiv region and Krasne in the Luhansk province. There was no immediate confirmation from Kyiv.

Russia to start supplies of electricity to breakaway Georgian region

MOSCOW (Reuters): Russia will start humanitarian supplies of electricity to Abkhazia, a breakaway Georgian region backed by Moscow, Russian news agencies quoted local officials as saying. Electricity shortages, common in Abkhazia in the winter months, began in early December when low water levels at the Enguri hydroelectric dam forced an emergency shutdown.

The region appealed to Russia for assistance, saying it was facing a "humanitarian catastrophe" due to a critical shortage of power. "In response to Abkhazia's appeal, the Russian leadership has once again extended a helping hand to us and is starting to carry out a humanitarian transfer of electricity to the republic," Interfax news agency cited Badra Gunba, Abkhazia's self-styled president. Shutdowns will be cut to four hours a day, the Abkhazian state energy company Chernomorenergo said, instead of the 9-11 hours the region is facing now.

Abkhazia borders Russia's southern Krasnodar region. Russia's Energy Ministry did not immediately reply to a request for comment. Russian electricity export operator InterRAO declined to comment. Abkhazia broke from Georgia's control in a war after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, during which hundreds of thousands of ethnic Georgians fled the region. Moscow has long supported it and another breakaway Georgian region, South Ossetia, and recognised them as independent after winning a five-day war against Georgia in 2008.

China flays Philippine plan

BEIJING (AP): China said a plan by the Philippines to deploy midrange missiles would be a provocative move that stokes regional tensions. The Philippines top army official told reporters in Manila that the military plans to acquire a midrange system to defend the country's territory amid tensions with China in the South China Sea.

"Yes, there are plans, there are negotiations, because we see its feasibility and adaptability," Lt. Gen. Roy Galido said. The US deployed its Typhon midrange missile system in the northern Philippines in April and troops from both countries have been training jointly for the potential use of the heavy weaponry. They have agreed to keep the system in the Philippines indefinitely to boost deterrence. China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said that deployment of a midrange missile by the Philippines would intensify geopolitical confrontation and an arms race. "It is an extremely irresponsible choice for the history and people of itself and the whole of Southeast Asia, as well as for the security of the region," she told a daily briefing. China, which opposes US military assistance to the Philippines, has been particularly alarmed by the deployment of the Typhon system, which can fire the Tomahawk Land Attack Missile. The Tomahawk can travel more than 1,000 miles (1,600 kilometers), putting China within its range. Under President Joe Biden, the US has strengthened an arc of alliances in the Indo-Pacific to counter China, including in any confrontation over Taiwan. The Philippines would not necessarily buy the Typhon system, Galido said. The army is working not only with the United States but with other friendly countries on a long list of weapons platforms that it plans to acquire, he said. The Philippines defense plan includes protecting its exclusive economic zone, which reaches 200 nautical miles (370 kilometers). "It is paramount for the army to be able to project its force up to that extent, in coordination, of course, with the Philippine navy and the Philippine air force," Galido said.



GAZA: Israeli forces continue to pound Gaza, killing four people in two separate air raids on so-called "safe zone" of al-Mawasi.

Syria's new leader says all weapons to come under 'state control'

DAMASCUS (AFP): Two weeks after seizing power in a sweeping offensive, Syria's new leader Ahmed al-Sharaa said weapons in the country, including those held by Kurdish-led forces, would come under state control. Sharaa spoke alongside Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, after earlier meeting with Lebanese Druze leaders and vowing to end "negative interference" in the neighbouring country.

Ankara-backed rebels played a key role in supporting Sharaa's Islamist group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), which headed a rebel alliance that seized Damascus on December 8, toppling longtime ruler Bashar al-Assad. During a press conference with Fidan, Sharaa said Syria's armed "factions will begin to announce their dissolution and enter" the army.

"We will absolutely not allow there to be weapons in the country outside state control, whether from the revolutionary factions or the factions present in the SDF area", he added, referring to the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces. Sharaa traded in the olive-green military shirt he sported just days ago for a suit and tie during his meetings at the presidential palace.

He also said "we are working on protecting sects and minorities from any attacks that occur between them" and from "external" actors exploiting the situation "to cause sectarian discord". "Syria is a country for all and we can coexist together," he added. That sentiment was on display at the colourfully-lit Christmas market in Damascus, where Batoul al-Law a dietician, said there were more Muslims than Christians.

"We have always celebrated both Christian and Muslim holidays

together," she said, but "you feel that people are now happier and more comfortable." Turkey's Fidan said sanctions on Syria must "be lifted as soon as possible". He called for the international community to "mobilise to help Syria get back on its feet and for the displaced people to return". Syria's nearly 14-year civil war killed more than half a million people and displaced more than half its population, with many of them fleeing to neighbouring countries, including three million in Turkey. Turkey has maintained strong ties with Syria's new leaders, and has continued military operations against Kurdish-held areas in northeastern Syria. A senior German diplomat, Tobias Tunkel, said on X that he had spoken with SDF leader Mazloum Abdi about rising tensions in the Kurdish-held border town of Kobane "and urgent steps to diffuse them."

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said a woman and her child were killed in "artillery shelling by pro-Turkey factions" in the Kobane countryside, and the factions clashed with the SDF further south. Ankara regards the People's Protection Units (YPG), the main component of the SDF, as being connected to the militant Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) at home, which both Turkey and Western allies deem a "terrorist" organisation. Regional powerhouse Saudi Arabia is also in direct contact with Syria's new authorities, having supported the opposition to Assad for years during Syria's civil war. Riyadh will send a delegation to the country soon, Syria's ambassador in the Saudi capital said.

During his meeting with visiting Lebanese Druze chiefs Walid and

Taymur Jumblatt, Sharaa said Syria would no longer engage in "negative interference in Lebanon at all". Syria "will stay at equal distance from all" in Lebanon, Sharaa added, acknowledging that Syria has been a "source of fear and anxiety" for its neighbour. Walid Jumblatt, long a fierce critic of Assad and his father Hafez who ruled Syria before him, arrived in Damascus at the head of a delegation of lawmakers from his parliamentary bloc and Druze religious figures. The Druze religious minority is spread across Lebanon, Syria, Israel and Jordan.

The Syrian army entered Lebanon in 1976, only leaving in 2005 after enormous pressure and mass protests following the assassination of former prime minister Rafic Hariri, a killing attributed to Damascus and its ally, Lebanon's Iran-backed Hezbollah group. The seizure of power by the Sunni Islamists of HTS -- proscribed as a terrorist organisation by many governments including the United States -- has sparked concern, though the group has in recent years sought to moderate its image. Global powers including the United States and the European Union have stepped up contacts with the war-ravaged country's new leaders, urging them to guarantee protections for women and minorities.

The foreign leaders have also stressed the importance of combating "terrorism and extremism". Assad had long played a strategic role in Iran's "axis of resistance", a loose alliance of regional proxy forces aligned against Israel, particularly in facilitating the supply of weapons to Hezbollah in neighbouring Lebanon. That axis has suffered heavy blows over the past year with Israel's devastation of the leadership of Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza.

Trump transition team plans immediate WHO withdrawal

WASHINGTON (Reuters): Members of Donald Trump's presidential transition team are laying the groundwork for the United States to withdraw from the World Health Organization on the first day of his second term, according to a health law expert familiar with the discussions.

"I have it on good authority that he plans to withdraw, probably on Day One or very early in his administration," said Lawrence Gostin, professor of global health at Georgetown University in Washington and director of the WHO Collaborating Center on National and Global Health Law. The Financial Times was first to report on the plans, citing two experts. The second expert, former White House COVID-19 response coordinator Ashish Jha, was not immediately available for comment.

The Trump transition team did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment. The plan, which aligns with Trump's longstanding criticism of the UN health agency, would mark a dramatic shift in US global health policy and further isolate Washington from international efforts to battle the pandemics. Trump has nominated several critics of the organization to top public health positions, including Robert F. Kennedy Jr., a vaccine skeptic who is up for the post of secretary of Health

and Human Services, which oversees all major US health agencies including the CDC and FDA.

Trump initiated the year-long withdrawal process from the WHO in 2020 but six months later his successor, President Joe Biden, reversed the decision. Trump has argued that the agency failed to hold China accountable for the early spread of COVID-19. He has repeatedly called the WHO a puppet of Beijing and vowed to redirect US contributions to domestic health initiatives. A WHO spokesperson declined to directly comment but referred Reuters to comments by WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus at a press

briefing on Dec. 10 in which he was asked whether he was concerned that the Trump administration would withdraw from the organization. Tedros said at the time that the WHO needed to give the US time and space for the transition. He also voiced confidence that states could finalize a pandemic agreement by May 2025.

Critics warn that a US withdrawal could undermine global disease surveillance and emergency response systems. "The US would lose influence and clout in global health and China would fill the vacuum. I can't imagine a world without a robust WHO. But US withdrawal would severely weaken the agency," Gostin said.

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New authorities 'very receptive' to probe of Assad war crimes

UNITED NATIONS (AP): The UN organization assisting in investigating the most serious crimes in Syria said the country's new authorities were "very receptive" to its request for cooperation during a just-concluded visit to Damascus, and it is preparing to deploy.

The visit led by Robert Petit, head of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism for Syria, was the first since the organization was established by the UN General Assembly in 2016. It was created to assist in evidence-gathering and prosecution of individuals responsible for possible war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide since Syria's civil war began in 2011. Petit highlighted the urgency of pre-

serving documents and other evidence before it is lost.

Since the rebel overthrow of Syria's President Bashar Assad and the rebel opening of prisons and detention facilities there have been rising demands from Syrians for the prosecution of those responsible for atrocities and killings while he was in power. "The fall of the Assad rule is a significant opportunity for us to fulfill our mandate on the ground," Petit said. "Time is running out. There is a small window of opportunity to secure these sites and the material they hold."

UN associate spokesperson Stephane Tremblay said the investigative team "is preparing for an operational deployment as early as possible and as soon as it

is authorized to conduct activities on Syrian soil." The spokesperson for the organization, known as the IIIM, who was on the trip with Petit, went further, telling The Associated Press: "We are preparing to deploy on the expectation that we will get authorization." "The representatives from the caretaker authorities were very receptive to our request for cooperation and are aware of the scale of the task ahead," the spokesperson said, speaking on condition of not being named. "They emphasized that they will need expertise to help safeguard the newly accessible documentation."

The IIIM did not disclose which officials in the new government it met with or the site that Petit

visited afterward. "Even at one facility," Petit said, "the mountains of government documentation reveal the chilling efficiency of systemizing the regime's atrocity crimes." He said that a collective effort by Syrians, civil society organizations and international partners will be needed, as a priority, "to preserve evidence of the crimes committed, avoid duplication, and ensure that all victims are inclusively represented in the pursuit of justice."

In June 2023, the 193-member General Assembly also established an Independent Institution of Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic to clarify the fate and whereabouts of more than 130,000 people missing as a result of the conflict.

Qatar and Jordan pledge support to Syria

DAMASCUS (Reuters): Qatar is ready to invest in Syria's energy sector and ports, the de facto Syrian leader Ahmed al-Sharaa said after meeting a senior Qatari official in Damascus, as his new Islamist-led administration widened contacts with Arab states. Sharaa also received Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman al-Safadi, the first Arab foreign minister to visit Damascus since the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) toppled Bashar al-Assad two weeks ago. Safadi said Jordan was ready to help Syria rebuild.

The meetings further widen the diplomatic contacts of the new administration established after Sharaa's HTS, a former Al Qaeda affiliate, led a decisive rebel offensive that overthrew Assad after more than 13 years of war. The end of Assad's rule has upended the geopolitics of the Middle East, dealing a major blow to his ally Iran and paving the way for other states to build new ties to a country at the crossroads of the region. Turkey, which long backed the Syrian opposition, was the first state to send its foreign minister to Damascus.

Qatar's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Mohammed Al-Khulaifi

flew into Damascus aboard the first Qatar Airways flight to land there since Assad was toppled. Sharaa, speaking to reporters as he stood next to Khulaifi, said that they had discussed the challenges of the coming period, and that he had invited Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani to visit Syria. "The Qatari side expressed its readiness for wide investments in Syria in many sectors, chief amongst them the energy sector in which they have great experience ... as well as the ports and airports," Sharaa said. Khulaifi said Qatar, a wealthy Gulf emirate and the world's third largest exporter of liquefied natural gas (LNG), would continue to "stand alongside our brothers in Syria at this time more than any other time".

"Syria and its people need support during this crucial phase which requires the concerted efforts of everyone, especially concerning the lifting of sanctions and the upcoming developmental projects," he said. Sharaa, also known by his nom de guerre Abu Mohammed al-Golani, has donned increasingly formal attire. He wore a blazer and open shirt in meetings with visiting offi-

cials last week and added a tie this week. Syria's stability is a key security concern for Jordan, a US allied Arab state which borders the country to the south.

Safadi said he agreed with Sharaa on cooperating to counter the smuggling of drugs and weapons from Syria to Jordan - a problem for years under Assad. Safadi also noted that Islamic State, with which Sharaa's group clashed earlier in the Syrian war, remained a threat. "Our brothers in Syria also realize that this is a threat. God willing, we will all cooperate, not just Jordan and Syria, but all Arab countries and the international community, in fighting this scourge that poses a threat to everyone," he said. "I focused on reconstruction efforts and Jordan will provide aid," Safadi said, adding that the new Syrian administration must have the opportunity to develop its plans. There was no immediate statement from the Syrian side on the meeting. Sharaa, who met senior US diplomats last week, severed ties with Al Qaeda in 2016. He has said his primary focus is on reconstruction and achieving economic development and that he is not interested in engaging in any new conflicts.

Black Sea oil spill volunteers ask Putin to send urgent help

MOSCOW (Reuters): Volunteers helping to clean up a major oil spill along Russia's Black Sea coast appealed in a video released for President Vladimir Putin to urgently send federal aid, saying that they and local authorities were overwhelmed.

The pollution, which has coated sandy beaches at and around Anapa, a popular summer resort, has caused serious problems for seabirds and everything from dolphins to porpoises. The oil is from two ageing tankers hit by a storm on Dec. 15. One of the vessels split in half, while the other ran aground. Putin called the incident an ecological disaster and officials from Russia's Emergency Situations Ministry say over 10,000 people are now involved in the clean-up.

But a group of around 30 local volunteers, who filmed their appeal on a

beach strewn with sacks full of polluted sand, told Putin and Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin that they believed the scale of the disaster was too big for local authorities to cope and demanded Moscow send urgent help. "The local authorities do not have the professional resources and technical means to neutralise the consequences of such a large-scale disaster and have been forced to compensate for the lack of manpower by using volunteers with shovels," a spokesperson for the group said, reading out a list of demands.

He said professional clean-up workers needed to be sent in along with scientists specialising in pollution and veterinarians to treat seabirds. Russia, he said, should also appeal to other countries for help with equipment. "This is a cry from the soul. Such a catastro-

phe cannot be defeated with shovels," a female volunteer added in the same video appeal. Alexander Kozlov, the minister for natural resources and ecology, visited Anapa to oversee the clean-up and said that 366 items of equipment were being used in the operation.

State TV said 40 km (25 miles) of coastline had already been cleaned, but Kozlov said the weather conditions were difficult and that oil was still washing up on beaches despite the erection of barriers at sea to try to keep it from the shore. Divers were due to check one of the tankers that got into trouble on Dec. 15 to see if it was still leaking oil. State TV said six dead dolphins had washed up on the shore in the last 24 hours and that an overnight storm had ripped open sacks full of contaminated sand gathered up by volunteers.

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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

Attacks such as Magdeburg strike at everyone's security

WHEN confronted by horrific scenes such as those witnessed in the German city of Magdeburg on Friday, where five people were killed and about 200 injured in a car-ramming attack, one of the first questions many people rightly ask is: why?

Certainly, the indiscriminate nature of the violence is shocking and strikes at people's sense of security. Among the dead is a nine-year-old boy; many people who were out shopping and socialising before Christmas will be left with life-changing injuries and lasting trauma. The attack was roundly condemned by numerous countries like the UAE as well as the Muslim Council of Elders. However, at this stage, much about the attacker's exact motives remains unknown. A 50-year-old Saudi doctor, identified by German police as Taleb A, is the main suspect. The long-time German resident has a history of troubling online outbursts; analysis of social media accounts allegedly held by him suggests he was a vocal critic of Islam who sympathised with the German far-right. After he was arrested at the scene, police said Taleb A was acting alone. But what pushed him to carry out such a heinous attack is still unclear.

Although the police investigation is at an early stage, there are worrying suggestions that Saudi warnings about the suspect went largely unheeded by German authorities. The warnings to Germany had reportedly been made several times since the suspect left Saudi Arabia in 2006, but a report in German outlet Welt claims a 2023 risk assessment by German investigators concluded the man posed "no specific danger". The uncertainty has not deterred some from indulging in speculation or seizing the opportunity to accrue political capital. A group of about 1,000 people gathered in Magdeburg on Saturday night, with some brandishing a large banner with the word "remigration" written on it. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban has claimed – without evidence – that the 2015 wave of immigration into Europe is responsible, adding that the EU's leadership wants such attacks "to happen to Hungary, too".

Many questions hang over this case, but it is clear that security and intelligence co-operation regarding such problematic individuals will have to be reviewed and improved. Not only do the general public have the right to life in safety, but Germany's Arab and Muslims communities – the vast majority of whom are law-abiding residents – will have to be protected from the hostility emanating from right-wing hardliners. This is true also of such communities across Europe. Many of these people have fled war and instability at home to begin new lives in peace and security; others were born in Europe. However, collectively they are often the target of pernicious political campaigns and unfairly lumped together with the tiny groups of extremists who have carried out attacks much like that seen in Magdeburg at the weekend. Immigrants to Europe want and deserve security as much as host communities do. It is up to the authorities in Germany and elsewhere to make sure that happens, and up to everyone influencing the situation to be weary of stoking discrimination, or worse, encouraging outright violence.

Ecuador's power outages due to drought

ECUADOR is facing a peculiar problem. It depends for 70 per cent of its electricity on hydroelectric sources. The country is facing drought for the first time in 60 years, its rivers running dry and its reservoirs near empty.

So the government had to impose power cuts since April, and they have now extended to 14 hours a day. President Daniel Noboa said the blackouts would end. But it raises the important question. Droughts would not only affect agricultural output, but it also affects power production when the dependency is as high as it is in Ecuador. And this has huge ramifications for the economy, especially the industry.

And in the manufacturing sector, it is the small units that suffer the most because they cannot afford to run generators. Production decreases, manufacturing units close down, and people are left without jobs. Smaller companies represent 90 to 95 per cent of the business sector. Says Marcela Arellano, president of the Ecuadorean Free Trade Union Organizations (CEOSL), "We were already impacted prior to the blackouts, but what the blackouts did was deteriorate our living conditions even more."

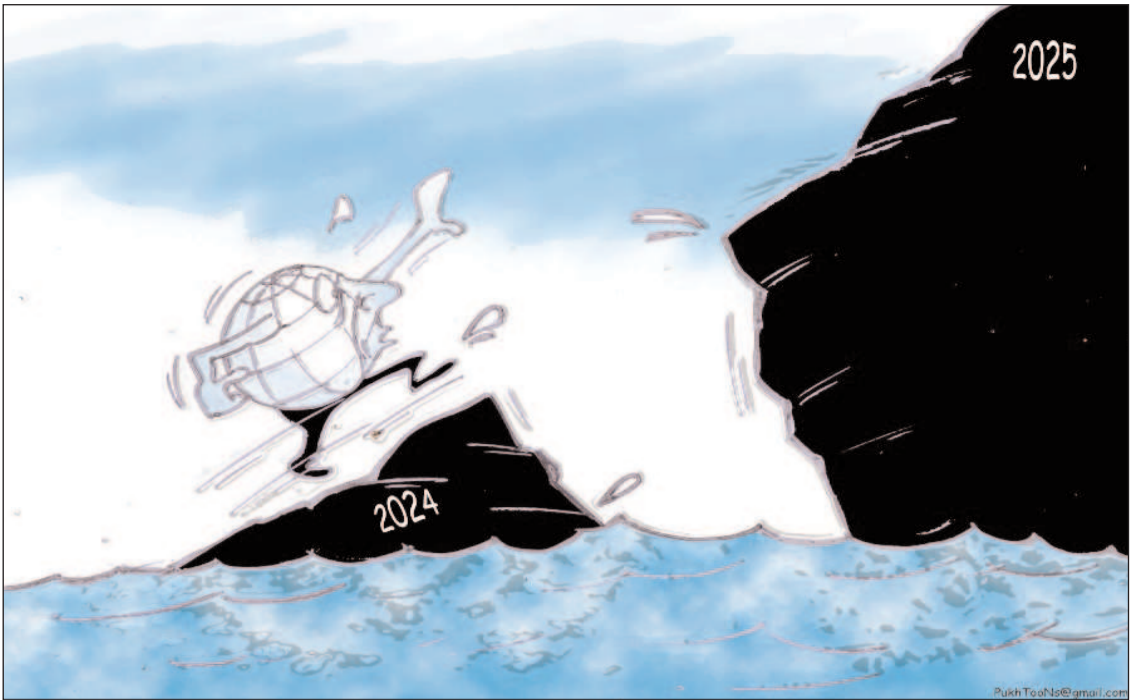
Arellano does not sound hopeful that things will improve. She says, "We don't see a path for recovery. First, there is no certainty that the outages will cease, and second there are no guarantees that there will be economic relief for the small and medium-size businesses." Energy expert Luis Hidalgo explained the problem of Ecuador's power problem. He said electricity and fossil fuel subsidies have kept the power rates low for the consumers, and government did not derive any income from it. As a result, the government could not invest in other forms of energy like solar and wind. And the private industry had no incentive to invest in alternative sources of energy.

For some time Ecuador imported electricity from Colombia. But as drought began to hit Colombia, it too had restricted electricity exports. Hidalgo believes that the grim situation will continue till April. Hydroelectric power has been considered a reliable renewable source of energy, but Ecuador's plight shows that in the face of droughts, which are not to be ruled out, hydroelectric power becomes an unreliable or fluctuating source of electricity. The thumb rule is that no country can rely on a single source of energy, and that its energy basket should remain diverse. Ecuador is falling short of 1000 to 1400 megawatts of power. In 2002 it generated 8,864 megawatts of power. The deficit is large enough. The unprecedented drought has made the situation worse. Protestors marched on the presidential palace in November, chanting as Noboa faces re-election in 2025. "There's no light. There's no education. And you have the nerve to ask for re-election?" Noboa has promised that by December things will get back to the normal state. The government has bought a floating 100-watt thermoelectric – it is a means of producing electricity from heat or other sources of heat like wood, natural gas, fossil fuel and even solid waste – plant with 23 generators from Turkey.

But the problem is not going to get solved easily. Noboa is aware of it and he wants to reallocate power subsidies, ending it for the mining industry, for example. He noted on social media in October: "The mining companies in Ecuador consume more energy than a hospital needs to operate. And yet, their energy rate has been subsidised by the state. The subsidies must go to those who need them most." It is a realisation that has come too late among the decision-makers. So hard decisions have to be taken. There is no clarity as to when the drought will end.

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Middle Eastern War Realigning power at the expense of the people

Aftab Alam

THE Middle East is once again in the throes of a conflict with wide-reaching implications, one that threatens to pull in local, regional, and global powers. The ongoing war between Israel and Palestinian factions, notably Hamas, has already caused immense loss of life and destruction. But beyond the immediate humanitarian crisis, the broader goal seems to be a reshuffling of regional power dynamics, with various players both inside and outside the Middle East jockeying for position.

The scale of the war and its potential to draw in external powers like the United States, Iran, and others have created a situation that could redefine geopolitical boundaries in the region for decades to come.

What we are seeing is not merely a localized conflict between Israel and Palestinian groups. It is, in fact, a collision between local, regional, and global powers—each seeking to realign the geopolitical landscape to fit their interests. The United States, Israel, pro-Western Arab nations, and Iran are all pursuing objectives in this chaotic environment.

Israel, in particular, is waging an all-out war not just against Hamas but also against Iranian-backed groups like Hezbollah, with the ultimate aim of weakening Iran's influence in the region. This has unfolded with the tacit approval of major global powers, especially the U.S. and pro-Western Arab states, which are looking to secure their interests in the future political configuration of the Middle East.

This current geopolitical situation draws parallels to the 19th-century Scramble for Africa, where great powers divided the continent into spheres of influence for their own strategic and economic gains. Today, the Middle East appears to be a settled sphere of influence for the United States, while other global powers like China and Russia are focused on different regions.

China, for example, seems more interested in expanding its influence in South and Southeast Asia, Africa, and parts of Latin America, while Russia is absorbed in maintaining influence over the Baltics, Central Asia, and Orthodox Eastern Europe. Both China and Russia have limited involvement in the current Middle Eastern conflict because they are preoccupied with their own pressing issues.

China's primary focus is on sustaining economic growth, while Russia is heavily invested in its military campaign in Ukraine. At this point, both powers have their hands full and would find it challenging to pursue more aggressive policies toward the Middle East, where the U.S. remains the dominant external actor.

The Hamas attack on Israel on October 7 has raised significant questions about whether Israel may have seen this as an opportunity to escalate the conflict. Some observers speculate that Israel might have taken a "looking the other way" approach on that day, allowing the assault to unfold to create a pretext for launching a broader military campaign. This would give Israel the justification it needed to not only target Hamas but also strike Iranian proxies and potentially Iran itself.

This theory holds that Israel's response was not merely reactive but a calculated step in its long-term strategy to reshape the region's power dynamics, and to do so with international support.

Israel's current military campaign seems to follow the principles of Otto von Bismarck, the 19th-century Prussian chancellor who achieved his objectives through calculated wars. By launching intense military operations, Israel is attempting to achieve its strategic interests by force rather than through diplomatic negotiations.

For decades, the status quo in the Middle East has been characterized by a delicate balance of power, with repeated cycles of conflict and ceasefires between Israel, Palestinian groups, and neighboring Arab nations. However, Israel's recent actions suggest it is seeking to disrupt this balance by weakening its adversaries, particularly Hamas and Hezbollah, and forcing a new regional order where it holds a position of strength.

Pro-Western Arab states like Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, and the UAE have been noticeably restrained in their public statements. While they offer lip service in support of the Palestinian cause, they seem to have given Israel a tacit green light to pursue its military objectives.

These nations stand to gain from a realignment in the Middle East that weakens Iran's influence and provides them with greater leverage in future regional negotiations.

When the time comes to sit at the negotiating table, these countries will likely be key players, working to shape the new regional order—even if it comes at the expense of the Palestinians and other Arabs. Israel's military actions are clearly aimed at securing a position of strength in any future negotiations. By inflicting severe damage on Gaza and Palestinian resistance forces, Israel is hoping to force Hamas and other groups into negotiations from a position of weakness. The humanitarian toll, while tragic, is seen by Israel as necessary collateral damage in the pursuit of long-term security and dominance.

This strategy also extends to Hezbollah, which Israel has directly involved in the conflict. By striking Hezbollah's positions and weakening its capabilities, Israel is hoping to limit Iran's influence in Lebanon and reduce the threat on its northern border.

Ironically, Hamas, which has become one of Israel's most formidable enemies, was originally seen by some Israeli officials as a useful counter-balance to the secular Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). In its early years, Hamas was indirectly supported by Israeli authorities in the hope that it would divide Palestinian political unity and weaken the PLO. However, this strategy has backfired, as Hamas has evolved into a powerful force that now plays a central role in the current conflict.

Iran has long backed groups like Hezbollah and Hamas as part of its broader strategy to project influence in the region. However, with the current conflict targeting its proxies, Iran may find itself at a disadvantage. Should Israel succeed in significantly weakening these groups, Iran may be forced to compromise.

At the negotiating table, Iran may end up sacrificing its influence over Hezbollah and Hamas in exchange for ending sanctions and gaining broader acceptance in the international community, especially among Western nations. The outcome could be a diminished role for Iran in the region, even if it manages to secure some concessions from the West.

At this moment in history, both China and Russia have limited strategic interests in the Middle East. China, as mentioned earlier, is focused on expanding its

economic influence in other regions, particularly in Asia and Africa. Russia, on the other hand, is heavily preoccupied with its military campaign in Ukraine and maintaining influence over its traditional spheres in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

Their lack of direct involvement in the current Middle Eastern conflict allows Israel and its Western allies to pursue their objectives with minimal interference. Without the looming presence of China or Russia, the U.S. remains the dominant power shaping the future of the Middle East.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's domestic political troubles also play a significant role in the current crisis. Facing corruption charges and political instability at home, Netanyahu has seized upon the conflict as a way to solidify his leadership and distract from internal issues. By projecting military strength and rallying nationalist sentiment, Netanyahu aims to shore up his political base and present himself as the protector of Israel in a time of crisis. The ongoing Middle East crisis is a complex power struggle involving multiple regional and global actors. Israel, with the backing of the U.S. and the tacit approval of pro-Western Arab states, is seeking to reshape the region's geopolitical landscape, particularly by weakening Iranian influence. However, the cost of this realignment will be borne primarily by the Palestinian people, who continue to suffer immense casualties and displacement.

Meanwhile, China and Russia, preoccupied with their own priorities, are unlikely to become directly involved in the conflict. This absence leaves the U.S. and its regional allies in a dominant position to influence the future of the Middle East.

As the conflict drags on, the risk of a broader regional war looms large, and the question remains whether any of the involved parties can achieve their strategic goals without further plunging the region into chaos.

For now, the people of the Middle East—especially Palestinians—remain at the mercy of larger geopolitical forces that are reshaping their world.

The writer is a civil servant with experience in various sectors, including development. He can be contacted at hashtnagar1@gmail.com

Reliance on foreign-born talent for innovation is undeniable

Arnab Neil Sengupta

IMMIGRATION is a divisive issue in Europe and the US at present, but the size and significance of its contribution, particularly in driving scientific progress, cannot be overstated. Just because politicians on either side of the Atlantic appear to have mismanaged immigration and border security, or failed to stop economic migrants and political activists from misusing asylum policies, does not mean that the historically strong link between foreign-born talent and innovation in diverse fields suddenly ceases to exist.

The connection is especially undeniable in this age of rapid advances in everything from robotic surgery and artificial intelligence to space exploration and quantum computing. Many immigrants excel in academia and research, with Nobel Prizes in science often being awarded to foreign-born researchers. For instance, more than one-third of US Nobel laureates in science since 2000 have been immigrants. The science and engineering departments of MIT, UC Berkeley, and Stanford have high percentages of foreign-born professors.

Countries with liberal immigration policies are veritable magnets, attracting not only foreign-born experts but also investors. They benefit from brain gain and knowledge transfer as these experts tend to bring diverse technical skills and fresh perspectives. Research shows that diverse teams are 35 percent more innovative and thus form a key driver of innovation in many industrially advanced countries. Companies with multicultural leadership also tend to see higher financial performance.

Few places exemplify the theory that tech-sector

CEOs (Satya Nadella and Sundar Pichai) happen to be Indian born.

Beyond the US, startups have a track record of thriving on foreign-born talent. Immigrant founders drive startup ecosystems in Berlin and London, while Canada's Startup Visa Program attracts global entrepreneurs. Immigrant-friendly policies have fueled Canada's tech growth. Similarly, Germany and Singapore have free zones driven by foreign expertise, with Singapore's pro-immigration stance proving key to fintech innovation. Arab Gulf states' burgeoning tech ecosystem also thrives on foreign professionals.

For China and India, if brain drain has been a net loss, reverse brain drain has been a blessing. Many tech workers have returned to these countries and established tech hubs such as Bengaluru. India's startup ecosystem, now among the largest in the world, owes much to returning expatriate entrepreneurs. Similarly, China has benefited from returning scholars and engineers who have contributed to advances in AI, manufacturing, and biotechnology.

That said, reliance on foreign-born talent is not without its drawbacks. Developing nations often suffer from brain drain, losing their top minds to richer economies. This talent drain can hurt innovation and economic growth in home countries.

In host countries, foreign-born talent can sometimes strain local job markets. Critics argue that reliance on immigrant professionals might reduce opportunities for local STEM graduates. There are also concerns about wage suppression in tech industries, with employers sometimes favoring foreign workers who may accept lower pay.

Countries often lack enough local STEM graduates to meet tech demand, so foreign-born talent bridges the gap in AI, cybersecurity, and biotech. For instance, nearly 70 percent of graduate students in computer science and electrical engineering programs at US universities are international students. Cutting-edge fields such as cloud computing and AI in Silicon Valley and other tech hubs in the US rely heavily on immigrant researchers. Today, foreign-born Americans dominate US tech entrepreneurship. Immigrants or their children founded 45 percent of Fortune 500 companies.

growth correlates with immigration policies as does America's Silicon Valley. The meteoric rise of this part of northern California parallels the influx of global talent. US immigration policies have had a direct impact on tech innovation, with increased H-1B visa availability coinciding with periods of brain drain in Asian countries. Indian and Chinese engineers have been pivotal in Silicon Valley's growth, and the networks they formed have fostered global technological partnerships and created cross-border opportunities.

Countries often lack enough local STEM graduates to meet tech demand, so foreign-born talent bridges the gap in AI, cybersecurity, and biotech. For instance, nearly 70 percent of graduate students in computer science and electrical engineering programs at US universities are international students. Cutting-edge fields such as cloud computing and AI in Silicon Valley and other tech hubs in the US rely heavily on immigrant researchers. Today, foreign-born Americans dominate US tech entrepreneurship. Immigrants or their children founded 45 percent of Fortune 500 companies.

More than 50 percent of unicorn startups in the US were founded by immigrants. US-based tech giants led by immigrants include Google, co-founded by Russian-born Sergey Brin; Tesla and SpaceX, led by South Africa-born Elon Musk; Intel, co-founded by Hungarian-born Andy Grove; and Microsoft and Google, both of whose

Integration is another challenge. Cultural and language barriers can limit team cohesion and create silos within tech workplaces. Over-reliance on immigrant talent might also cause countries to neglect their local STEM education systems, failing to nurture homegrown talent.

Such dependence leaves countries vulnerable to sudden shifts in immigration policies, potentially disrupting tech ecosystems. Governments sometimes fear foreign access to sensitive technology sectors, citing concerns over espionage and intellectual property theft. Visa fraud remains an additional risk.

While the benefits of foreign-born talent in driving tech innovation are undeniable, addressing these challenges is essential to ensure long-term resilience in global high-tech ecosystems. Policymakers must strike a delicate balance between utilizing international expertise and nurturing local talent pools in order to secure a competitive edge in the innovation race.

Tech innovation thrives on diversity, adaptability and cross-border collaboration. As geopolitical tensions rise and immigration debates intensify from Washington to Berlin, it is crucial to remember that foreign-born talent remains an indispensable global engine of progress. The question is not whether countries with ambitious development visions can afford to welcome immigrant talent, but whether they can afford not to.

— Arab News

Will New York's subway violence ever end?

A man has been arrested by New York police on charges of murder and arson following the horrific death of a woman who was set on fire aboard a subway train early Sunday morning.

Surveillance footage captured the suspect sitting on a nearby bench outside the train, watching coldly as flames consumed the woman inside the subway car.

Authorities have confirmed that the victim and suspect were strangers,

with no prior connection before this tragic event.

New York City Police Commissioner Jessica Tisch condemned the incident as "one of the most depraved crimes one person could possibly commit against another human being."

Tragically, on the exact same day, another violent incident occurred in a different subway line: a 69-year-old man fatally stabbed one of two men attempting to rob him,

Shan Xueying

injured another.

Despite these harrowing events, New York police report a 6 percent reduction in major felonies between January and November of this year compared to the same timeframe last year.

However, the data also shows a troubling increase in murders within the transit system. So far this year, 10 murders have been reported in the city's subway system, double the five cases

investigated during the same period last year.

While New York City thrives as a global financial center and cultural hub, it continues to grapple with rampant cases such as theft, fraud, robbery, violence and murder. In the heart of this bustling metropolis, the subway serves as a vital artery connecting millions to their destinations. Yet for many, the journey is fraught with uncertainty—will they arrive safely, or will the ride end in unforeseen tragedy?

Gaza: A story of genocide and steadfastness

THE Israeli war on Gaza is epitomized by the story of Beit Lahia, a small Palestinian town in the northern part of the Strip.

When Israel launched its ground operations in Gaza, Beit Lahia was already largely destroyed due to many days of relentless Israeli bombardment, which killed thousands. Still, the border town resisted, leading to a hermetic Israeli siege, which was never lifted, even when the Israeli military redeployed out of much of northern Gaza in January 2024.

Beit Lahia is a largely isolated town, a short distance away from the fence separating besieged Gaza from Israel. It is surrounded mostly by agricultural areas that make it nearly impossible to defend.

Yet, a year of grisly Israeli war and genocide in Gaza did not end the fighting there. On the contrary, 2024 is ending where it started, with intense fighting on all fronts in Gaza and with Beit Lahia — a town that was supposedly “conquered” earlier on — still leading the fight.

Beit Lahia is a microcosm of Israel’s failed war in the Strip: a bloody grind that has led nowhere, despite the massive destruction, the repeated ethnic cleansing of the population, the starvation, and the genocide. Every day of Israel’s terrible war on the Palestinians serves as a reminder that there are no military solutions and that the Palestinian will cannot be broken, no matter the cost or the sacrifices involved.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, however, remains unconvinced. He began this year with more promises of “total victory” and ends it wanted by the International Criminal Court on war crimes charges.

The issuing of an arrest warrant for the Israeli leader was a reiteration of a similar position taken by the International Court of Justice at the start of 2024. However, that court’s position was not as strong as many had hoped or wanted to believe. The world’s highest court in January ordered Israel “to take action to prevent acts of genocide,” but stopped short of ordering Tel Aviv to halt its war.

Israel’s objectives have remained unclear in 2024, although some Israeli politicians have provided clues as to what the war on Gaza is really all about. In January, several ministers, including 12 from Netanyahu’s Likud party, took part in a conference calling for the resettlement of Gaza and the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. “Without settlements, there is no security,” extremist Finance Minister Bezalel

Smotrich said.

For that to happen, the Palestinian people themselves, not merely those fighting on the ground, had to be tamed, broken, and defeated. Thus the “flour massacres,” a new Israeli war tactic that aimed to kill as many Palestinians as possible as they waited for the few aid trucks that were allowed to reach northern Gaza.

On Feb. 29, more than 100 Gazans were killed while queuing for aid. They were mown down by Israeli soldiers as they desperately tried to lay their hands on a loaf of bread, some baby milk, or a bottle of water. This scene was repeated again and again in the north, as well as in other parts of the Gaza Strip, throughout the year.

The aim was to starve the Palestinians in the north so that they would be forced to flee to other parts of the Strip. Famine actualized as early as January and many of those who tried to flee south were killed any-

Dr. Ramzy Baroud

far only Israeli apology of the entire war.

Desperate to distract from its failure in Gaza, as well as the northern border with Lebanon, and keen on presenting the Israeli public with any kind of victory, the Israeli military began escalating its war beyond Gaza. This included the strike on the Iranian Consulate building in Damascus on April 1. Despite repeated attempts, which included the July assassination in Iran of the head of Hamas’ political bureau, Ismail Haniyeh, an all-out regional war has not yet come to pass.

Another escalation was taking place, this time not by Netanyahu but by millions of people around the world who demanded an end to the Israeli war. A focal point of the protests were the student movements that spread across US college campuses and, ultimately, worldwide. Instead of allowing free

Spain recognizing the state of Palestine on May 28. The decisions were largely symbolic but indicated that Western unity around Israel was faltering.

Israel remained unfazed and, despite international warnings, invaded the Rafah area in southern Gaza on May 7, seizing control of the Philadelphia Corridor — a buffer zone between Gaza and the Egyptian border that extends for 14 km.

Netanyahu’s government insisted that only war could bring the hostages back. There was very little success with that strategy, however. In June, Israel, with logistical support from the US and other Western countries, managed to rescue four of the hostages held in the Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza. To do so, Israel killed at least 276 Palestinians and wounded 800 more.

In August, another heart-wrenching massacre took place, this time at the Al-Tabaen school in Gaza

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From the early days of the war, Israel understood that, to ethnically cleanse Palestinians, they must target all aspects of life in the Strip. This included hospitals, bakeries, markets, power grids, water stations, and the like.

Gaza’s hospitals, of course, received a large share of the attacks. In March, Israel attacked the Al-Shifa Medical Complex in Gaza City with greater ferocity than before. When it finally withdrew on April 1, the Israeli army destroyed the entire compound, leaving behind mass graves containing hundreds of bodies, mostly medical staff, women, and children. They even executed several patients.

Aside from a few statements of concern by Western leaders, little was done to bring the genocide to an end.

Only when seven international aid workers with the World Central Kitchen charity were killed by Israel was a global outcry heard, leading to the first and so

speech to flourish, however, America’s largest academic institutions resorted to summoning the police, who violently shut down many of the protests and arrested hundreds of students, many of whom were not allowed to return to their colleges.

Meanwhile, the US continued to block international efforts aimed at producing a ceasefire resolution at the UN Security Council. Ultimately, on May 31, US President Joe Biden delivered a speech conveying what he termed an “Israeli ground proposal” to end the war. After some delay, Hamas accepted the proposal, but Israel rejected it. In his rejection, Netanyahu referred to Biden’s speech as “incorrect” and “incomplete.” Strangely, but also unsurprisingly, the White House blamed the Palestinians for the failed initiative.

Losing faith in the American leadership, some European countries began changing their foreign policy doctrines on the conflict, with Ireland, Norway, and

City, where 93 people, mostly women and children, were murdered in a single Israeli strike. According to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, women and children were the main victims of the Israeli genocide, accounting for 70 percent as of Nov. 8.

An earlier report by The Lancet medical journal stated that, if the war had stopped in July, “186,000 or even more” Palestinians would have been killed. The war, however, went on. The genocide in Gaza seemed to maintain the same killing rate, despite the major regional developments, including the Iranian-Israeli tit-for-tat strikes and the major Israeli ground operation in Lebanon.

Still, Israel failed to achieve any of its strategic goals of the war. Even the killing of Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar in battle on Oct. 16 would not alter the course of the war in any way.

Israel’s frustration grew by leaps and bounds

throughout the year. Its desperate attempt to control the global narrative on the Gaza genocide largely failed. In July, after listening to the testimonies of more than 50 countries, the International Court of Justice issued a landmark ruling that “Israel’s continued presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is illegal.”

That ruling, which expressed international consensus on the matter, was in September translated into a UN General Assembly resolution “demanding an end to Israel’s occupation of Palestine within the next 12 months.”

All of this effectively meant that Israel’s attempt at normalizing its occupation of Palestine and its quest to illegally annex the West Bank were considered null and void by the international community. Israel, however, doubled down, venting its rage against West Bank Palestinians, who have also been experiencing one of the worst Israeli pogroms in many years.

The Palestinian Health Ministry stated in late November that at least 777 Palestinians had been killed in the West Bank since Oct. 7, 2023, while hundreds more had been wounded and more than 11,700 arrested.

To make matters worse, Smotrich called for the full annexation of the West Bank. This call was made soon after the election of Donald Trump as the next US president, an event that initially inspired optimism among Israeli leaders, but later caused concern that Trump may not serve the role of savior for Israel after all.

The International Criminal Court last month issued its historic ruling to seek the arrest of Netanyahu and his former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant. The decision represented a measure of hope, however faint, that the world is finally ready to hold Israel accountable for its many crimes.

The year 2025 could indeed represent that watershed moment. This remains to be seen. However, as far as Palestinians are concerned, even with the failure of the international community to stop the genocide and rein in Israel, their steadfastness, or “sumoud,” will remain strong until freedom is finally attained.

— Dr. Ramzy Baroud is a journalist and author. He is editor of The Palestine Chronicle and nonresident senior research fellow at the Center for Islam and Global Affairs. His latest book, co-edited with Ilan Pappé, is “Our Vision for Liberation: Engaged Palestinian Leaders and Intellectuals Speak Out.”

25 years that were ‘beyond all expectations’

OVER the past few weeks I have been asked to summarize my assessment of the first 25 years of the existence of the Macao Special Administrative Region, and my standard answer has been “beyond all expectations”.

And that’s as someone who visited Macao for the first time in 1980, when it was still under Portuguese rule, covered the historic ceremony of Dec 19 to 20, 1999, marking China’s resumption of exercising its sovereignty over the territory, and will cover this week’s 25th anniversary celebrations of the establishment of the Macao SAR and inspection tour by President Xi Jinping.

First of all, no one predicted in late 1999 that Macao’s gross domestic product would grow phenomenally and its per capita GDP would figure among the highest in the world within just a few decades. According to official figures, Macao’s GDP soared from 51.9 billion Macao patacas (MOP) in 1999 to 379.5 billion MOP in 2023 (approximately \$47 billion, based on the 2023 average exchange rate).

Some international consultancies and media outlets have forecast that Macao’s per capita GDP is set to reach the top of the per capita GDP world ranking in no time, or even that it may already have reached it, competing with Luxembourg and Singapore for the number-one position. As a realist, I prefer to wait for the IMF to confirm it. Anyway, making it to the top five in just a quarter of a century is worth accolades.

But, of course, it’s not just Macao’s economy that has produced extraordinary results. The SAR has also made considerable progress on the social welfare, public administration, public housing, education and public health fronts, alongside an overall modernization and, last but not least, digitalization drive — virtually every resident’s Macao One Account has made life much more convenient, and convenience is something that locals appreciate more than everything else, apart from public security and political stability.

Public security has been a fait accompli since Macao’s return to the motherland. I guess that the sheer presence of a People’s Liberation Army garrison here has scared the socks off the gangsters.

Macao was affected by gangland violence in the 1990s that threatened its image as a safe tourist destination. However, it’s important to point out that Macao’s crime wave did not affect the city’s politi-

Harald Brüning

cal transition that formally began after the signing of the China-Portugal Joint Declaration on the Question of Macao in Beijing in April 1987 and gathered speed with the promulgation of the Basic Law of the Macao SAR in March 1993. Compared with Hong Kong, Macao’s transfer from Portuguese to Chinese rule was markedly smooth.

Contrary to what I have been reading in the media over the past few decades, on Dec 19 to 20, 1999, Portugal did not “hand over” its sovereignty over Macao to China; instead the latter “resumed the exercise of sovereignty over Macao” in order to establish the MSAR and in line with the Joint Declaration.

Without “one country, two systems”, which also applies to Hong Kong and, let’s hope, to Taiwan in the not-too-distant future, Macao’s politico-economic success over the past 25 years would, most probably, can never have been achieved. “One

Public security has been a fait accompli since Macao’s return to the motherland. I guess that the sheer presence of a People’s Liberation Army garrison here has scared the socks off the gangsters. Macao was affected by gangland violence in the 1990s that threatened its image as a safe tourist destination. However, it’s important to point out that Macao’s crime wave did not affect the city’s political transition that formally began after the signing of the China-Portugal Joint Declaration on the Question of Macao in Beijing in April 1987 and gathered speed with the promulgation of the Basic Law of the Macao SAR in March 1993. Compared with Hong Kong, Macao’s transfer from Portuguese to Chinese rule was markedly smooth.

country, two systems” was a political masterstroke initiated in the early 1980s by then Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping, who, regrettably, was unable to witness Hong Kong’s return on July 1, 1997, as he passed away on Feb 19, 1997. I was covering the visit of Portugal’s then president Jorge Sampaio, to Macao. I remember that he was visibly shaken by the sad news.

While the Dec 19 to 20, 1999, events “only” happened a quarter of a century ago, I do feel that they happened a “very long time” ago. I think the point is that since then so many things have happened here, mostly for the better, such as its phenomenal economic growth, modernization drive, administrative reforms, the setting-up of Forum Macao as a platform for economic, commercial and even cultural relations between China and Portuguese-speaking countries that has brought together 10 countries with a combined population of over 1.6 billion people, the setting-up of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-

Macao Greater Bay Area and the establishment of the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, as well as the government’s “talent acquisition” import scheme. Macao’s ongoing incorporation into the GBA, including the cooperation zone in Hengqin, entails both opportunities and challenges for Macao that, in my view, need time to be “digested” by the local residents.

In any case, Macao’s return to the motherland happened at the end of the last century when it was high time Westerners ruling territories in what then known as the Third World drew to a close. Incidentally, the United States returned control of the Panama Canal to Panama on Dec 31, 1999. Incredibly, there are still quite a number of territories in what is now known as the Global South that continue to be ruled by Western countries.

And then there was the three-year impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Macao, which affected all

of us. The three years weren’t a walk in the park but, in all fairness, outgoing Chief Executive Ho Iat-seng and his team deserve praise for having been able to keep the nasty virus largely at bay, also because of the close cooperation between local and central government officials.

Macao has enjoyed 25 years of progress, patriotism and prosperity thanks largely to the strong support from the central authorities, not only in Beijing but also their representatives in Macao — the Liaison Office and Foreign Ministry Commission.

President Xi Jinping paid inspection visits to the SAR in 2014 and 2019, and is conducting his third such visit from Wednesday to Friday. During his stay he will swear in the next government under Chief Executive Sam Houfai, who in the past few weeks has repeatedly reaffirmed the significance of the “one country, two systems” principle, national security and people-focused policies.

— China Daily

China, CEE need to tap more potential in 2025

CHINA proposed the high-quality Belt and Road Initiative for tangible win-win cooperation between participants and to face challenges together at a time when the world was undergoing drastic changes and facing major challenges. Central and Eastern European countries, lying between Asia and Europe, are important participants in this initiative.

The CEE countries have set models of hard connectivity of infrastructure, soft connectivity of institutions and rules, and people-to-people bonds in the BRI, and act as a lever of stability in China-Europe relations.

An important factor in China-CEE cooperation is to recognize the differences between the two sides. Differences exist among countries in Eastern and Western Europe, in old and new Europe, as well as among the CEE countries.

At the 10th high-level symposium of Think Tanks of China and CEE countries in Beijing on Nov 29, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban’s political director Balazs Orban said that the “16 plus 1” cooperation framework between China and CEE countries has changed into “7 plus 7 plus 1”, with some countries viewing deepening of relations with China as

a risk and others seeing in it opportunities.

European Union countries, including CEE countries, have varied economic goals and geopolitical positions because of which they hold different attitudes toward China. For instance, Poland supports the tariffs that the European Union has imposed on Chinese electric vehicles in order to safeguard its traditional auto industry and auto part producers, while Hungary and Serbia see deeper cooperation with China on EVs as beneficial for their countries and clean energy transition. Additionally, CEE countries that rely heavily on the US for security, are limiting cooperation with China in high-tech, infrastructure and cultural exchanges. Understanding the internal complexity will help China better cooperate with CEE countries.

China and CEE countries can avoid and address misunderstandings through active dialogue and deepened mutual understanding. European countries’ perception of China has been increasingly influenced by the US-led West. When media outlets in CEE countries were privatized, they received foreign capital, in which the US had a dominant role. Therefore, people in CEE countries are fed misinformation

through media reports and stereotyped opinion pieces that portray China negatively. Besides, the West’s Euro-centric and civilization conflict theory hinder people from

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The Global Civilization Initiative that China has proposed highlights respect for diverse civilizations and promotes cultural exchanges. Face-to-face dialogue and more mutual understanding can help China and CEE countries take the first step to dispel misconceptions.

Although the two sides

have seen significant hard connectivity of infrastructure such as the Hungary-Serbia railway and the Peljesac Bridge in

standards and market access with the EU, and the impacts of the Russia-Ukraine conflict have caused hindrances for hard connectivity cooperation in the region. In the future, soft connectivity of institutions and rules, and people-to-people bonds may become a major driver of China-CEEC cooperation based on growing connectivity, China and CEE countries need to find solutions to cope with political impacts and seek common interests.

The CEE countries need a more consistent China policy as the EU defines China as a “partner, competitor, and systemic rival”. It is difficult to make a partner a competitor and rival at the same time. To promote cooperation, China

Chen Siyang

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nectivity, China and CEE countries need to find solutions to cope with political impacts and seek common interests.

The CEE countries

dent-elect Donald Trump is likely to pull the US out of multilateral mechanisms, particularly climate forums. However, addressing climate change is a global concern. If the US withdraws from global climate governance, China and the CEE countries can continue cooperation and find new common ground.

The high tariff policies whether or not they solve the US’ economic problems. Seeking investment and project cooperation is important for CEE countries, especially when many of them are facing similar energy crises and high inflation while their economic development lags behind that of Western European countries. Since China has the willingness to expand

should cooperate with CEE countries in multilateral frameworks, and the CEE countries should treat China as a partner rather than a rival.

Incoming US presi-

Trump has threatened — 60 percent on Chinese imports and 10-20 percent on imports from the EU — will lead to global economic slowdown and inflation irrespective of

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SCCI demands restoration of Hajj flight from Peshawar

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Fazal Moqem Khan urged the federal government and ministry of religious affairs and interfaith harmony along with relevant authorities to issues instructions for restoration of Hajj flight operations from Peshawar to ease difficulties of pilgrims and business community.

He also demanded proactive steps to operationalize the Hajj camp in Hayatabad Peshawar.

According to detail, a delegation of Hajj Organisers Association of Pakistan (HOAP) headed

by its central chief coordinator Haji Sanaullah held a meeting with SCCI president Fazal Moqem Khan here at the chamber house.

Other members of the delegation include Pir Ishaq Ahmad Jan Zakori, Ghazanfar Ali Saval, Abid Pervez Awan, Haji Akhtar Gul, Farooq Jan Durrani, Haji Musa Khan, Ibrahim Ahmad Paracha, along with HOAP office bearers, members and Hajj tour operators and others.

The SCCI senior vice president Abdul Jalil Jan was also present in the meeting.

The delegation congratulated SCCI president Fazal Moqem Khan and rest of

his cabinet members for taking charge of their respective offices.

Delegation apprised the meeting about problems, difficulties and reservations of the business community and urged the chamber to play a role for amicable resolution of their issues.

Members of the delegation said the business community, especially Hajj pilgrims were being faced with hardships owing to suspension of Hajj flight operations from Peshawar.

On other hand, they said Hajj pilgrims have to visit Islamabad several times for necessary documentation and passports.

The delegation

expressed concern over the non-functional Hajj Camp Hayatabad Peshawar.

Fazal Moqem, on the occasion, assured the meeting that every possible step would be taken to resolve all problems through the SCCI platform.

He said Hajj flight operations had shifted to Islamabad which is sheer unjust with Hajj pilgrims and business community.

The SCCI chief demanded the federal government and MoRA to issue directives for immediate resumption of Hajj flight operations from Peshawar to facilitate pilgrims and the business community.



PESHAWAR: Central Chief Coordinator HOAP Haji Sanaullah presenting a bouquet to SCCI president Fazal Moqem Khan and senior vice president Abdul Jalil Jan at Chamber's House.

Khurram visits PSX; holds talks with top management

ISLAMABAD (APP): Khurram Schehzad, Adviser to Finance Minister, was invited to the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) by CEO, PSX, Farrukh Sabzwari, to discuss strategies for enhancing the depth and performance of the capital market.

During his meeting with the CEO and senior management of PSX, Schehzad received a comprehensive overview of PSX's strategic initiatives aimed at unlocking potential of Pakistan's capital markets, said a press release issued here on Tuesday.

The CEO of PSX emphasized that, despite challenges, Pakistan's capital markets possess immense potential.

He expressed confidence that through a well-formulated strategy, PSX could realize this potential and significantly contribute to the economy.

Schehzad reaffirmed the government's commitment to supporting capital market growth, recognizing its role in stabilizing as well as underpinning growth in the country's economy.

To achieve this goal, Mr. Schehzad urged the management to formalize rec-

ommendations for structural changes and privatization of State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), which could advance governmental goals and boost market capitalization.

Furthermore, he recommended rebranding and repositioning the GEM board to function as a platform for venture capital and startup fundraising.

The Key Initiatives planned and discussed include, taking concrete steps for high-value listings to increase market capitalization and attract foreign investment and setting an ambitious target to increase the investor base to 2% of the national population within three years, engaging brokers and mutual funds in the campaign.

Introduction of new investment products, such as Exchange-Traded Funds (ETFs), options markets, and derivatives, to enhance market attractiveness and exploring algorithmic trading and robo-advisory services, drawing insights from successful implementations in countries like China.

Mr. Schehzad emphasized the need for the PSX and the SECP to collaboratively develop a roadmap

aimed at increasing Pakistan's weight within the MSCI Frontier Markets index, ultimately achieving inclusion in the MSCI Emerging Markets index. He also endorsed the recommendation to form a formal committee comprising PSX, SECP, and the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) to leverage each entity's strengths.

This initiative would aim to foster financial inclusion, enhance public awareness, and promote seamless digitization and promoting the KSE-100 Index's remarkable returns was identified as an essential task for brokers and market participants.

Mr. Schehzad praised the relaunch of cash-settled futures as a significant step towards developing the country's derivatives market.

Collaboration with Chinese capital markets is critical to facilitate cross-border investment opportunities, broaden market access, and stimulate investor participation. With these initiatives, Pakistan's capital market is poised for significant growth, driving economic development and stability.

Gold prices decline by Rs800

ISLAMABAD (APP): The price of 24 karat per tola gold decreased by Rs800 and was sold at Rs272,600 on Tuesday against its sale at Rs273,400 the previous day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs685 to Rs233,711 from Rs234,396 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat gold declined to Rs214,235 from Rs214,863, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

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 decreased by \$8 to \$2,614 from \$2,622, the Association reported.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Seven ships, MSC Nerissa-V, Wisco Adventure, Navigator Luna, Lusail, Yasa Emirhan and Darya Jaya, carrying Container, Palm oil, Chemicals, LNG and Coal, berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal, Liquid Cargo Terminal, Engro Vopak Terminal, Port Gas Terminal, Multi-Purpose Terminal-4 and Pakistan International Bulk Terminal respectively during last 24 hours.

Meanwhile another containers ship 'MSC Candice' also arrived at outer anchorage on Tuesday morning.

Eleven ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them a containers ship 'MSC Nerissa-V' left the port on Tuesday morning, while two more ships, African Bari Bird and Navigator Luna are expected to sail today afternoon.

Cargo volume of 142,129 tonnes, comprising 67,722 tonnes imports cargo and 74,407 tonnes export cargo carried in 1,560 Containers (20 TEUs Imports & 1,540 TEUs Export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

Nineteen ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them a containers ship 'MSC Candice' & another Containers ship 'Maersk Pittsburgh' are expected to take berths at QICT respectively on Tuesday. Meanwhile two more container ships, Maersk Cabo Verde and GFS Genesis are due to arrive at outer anchorage on Wednesday.

The session concluded with a detailed Q&A session, where participants asked various tax related questions from Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) officials.

communities.

The session concluded with a detailed Q&A session, where participants asked various tax related questions from Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) officials.

This initiative is part of FBR's ongoing efforts to foster a better understanding of the tax system among youth and promote a culture of tax compliance across Pakistan.

detailed presentation on tax matters was given by FBR officials. Speaking on the occasion, Second Secretary (Tax Education) highlighted the various measures being taken by FBR to enhance the transparency and efficiency of the revenue system.

In his briefing, he urged students to become "Tax Ambassadors" by spreading awareness about tax responsibilities in their

Filing of income tax return: FBR organizes tax awareness session



F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), through its Taxpayers Services Wing (TPS), organized a tax awareness session on the topic of "Filing of Income Tax Return" at University of Wah. The session was attended by officials of the University and TPS Wing and a large number of students.

During the session, a

Stock Exchange turns bearish, loses 1,509 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to bearish trend on Tuesday, losing 1,509.61 points, a negative change of 1.33 percent, closing at 112,414.81 points as compared to 113,924.42 points on the last trading day.

A total of 880,598,305 shares were traded during the day as compared to 857,834,976 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs54.455 billion against Rs50.549 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 456 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 129 of

them recorded gains and 288 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 39 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 127,408,831 shares at Rs1.78 per share, Fauji Foods Limited with 67,135,769 shares at Rs14.95 per share and Sui Gui South Gas with 33,559,500 shares at Rs46.09 per share.

Hoechst Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs100.00 per share price, closing at Rs2,850.00, whereas the runner-up was Shahrud Sugar Mills Limited with Rs31.29 rise in its per share

price to Rs474.96.

Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs99.99 per share closing at Rs21,000.01 followed by Nestle Pakistan Limited with Rs97.35 decline to close at Rs7,232.00.

Rupee gains 09 paise against dollar: Rupee on Tuesday depreciated by 09 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs278.47 against the previous day's closing of Rs278.56.

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 decreased by 75 paise to close at Rs289.44 against the last day's closing of Rs290.18, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs1.77, whereas a decline of 82 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs349.10 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs349.92.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham went down by 04 percent and was traded at Rs75.81 whereas that of Saudi Riyal went up by 01 paise to close Rs74.13.

Poultry chicken prices rise once again up to Rs333 in twin cities

ISLAMABAD (APP): In the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, poultry prices have decreased for the past six weeks to 260 but have started to rise again up to Rs333. The Poultry consumables, chicken and eggs prices have been reduced for the past few weeks, and are once again out of reach of the public.

The prices of poultry items have increased by 25 percent in the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi during the last two weeks, which has created huge volatility in the market.

According to the market survey conducted by APP here Tuesday, during past two weeks in the twin cities, a 25 percent increase was witnessed in the price of chicken, while a same 30 per cent

increase in the price of poultry eggs in the last six weeks.

According to the survey, the price of live chicken in the twin cities was between Rs333 and Rs340 per kg from the last week of this month of December. Similarly, chicken meat is sold at Rs 485 to Rs500 per kg in the market of both cities.

During this time, it was also found that poultry eggs used to be sold at Rs320 to Rs230 per dozen in the market of both cities.

Meanwhile, talking to APP, the former Chairman Pakistan Poultry Association (PPA), Muhammad Ashraf said the increase in the current prices of poultry is due to demand and supply issues.

He said that the increase in

poultry business inputs and cost of doing business was seen across the country due to which the market was in crisis.

He said that many people related to the chicken business in the country were affected by the current crisis and especially small businesses and poultry farms were closed, adding the poultry business in the four provinces including Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is suffering from the current economic crisis.

Chaudhry Ashraf said that the country's economic conditions are also an important issue and the poultry feed ingredients imported from foreign countries are very expensive, in which soybean is important. He said that

many soybean ships have stopped at Karachi port, which has an inevitable impact on poultry prices.

Pakistan Poultry Association (PPA) has also called for a further increase in the prices of chicken and there was an increase observed in the prices of poultry items in the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

On this occasion, poultry feed industrialist and Senior Vice President of Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Hamza Sarosh said that soybean is included in the basic ingredients of poultry feed. Hamza said that soybeans for poultry feed were imported from America, Brazil and Argentina.

Court Notice

In the court of Sidra Jalal civil judge-II judicial Magistrate-II matta swat. Case No.104/1. Institution 03/09/2024.Hearing date 17/01/2025. Syed Murtaza VS shoukat etc.Notice to defendant # 4) Syed Hassan Raza s/o syed Mohsin Raza deceased r/o bedara tehsil matta district Swat. In above mentioned case the respondent can't be served in the ordinary way, it is therefore proclaimed that if said respondents will not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8:30 am dated 17/01/2025, ex-parte proceeding will be held against the mentioned respondents under my hand and seal of this court.

Asian stocks mostly up after US tech rally

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Asian stocks were mostly higher on Tuesday after a tech rally on Wall Street, but their gains remained modest in thin Christmas Eve trade. Overnight, European stocks bounced around while US equities shook off early weakness to push higher as investors waited to see if a so-called Santa Claus rally would materialise.

US "stocks didn't really

have any direction in the morning, then we got this tech rally that just sort of drifted higher all day", said Steve Sosnick of Interactive Brokers.

Analysts said that could help boost semiconductor-related shares, including in Tokyo, although the key Nikkei index closed down 0.3 percent.

Hong Kong closed up 1.1 percent and Shanghai gained 1.3 percent. Singapore rose 0.5

percent and Bangkok was up 0.7 percent, while Seoul and Taipei were flat.

Hang Seng Bank said in a note that Hong Kong stocks were "consolidating before the long holiday". It was among several exchanges, including Sydney, closing early on Tuesday.

"This is the time of the year when there's a lot of noise and little to no signal in price action," said Kyle, senior market analyst.

SBBGCCL's 1st Annual Parents Day celebrated

F.P. Report

LARKANA: Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Girls Cadet College Larkana (SBBGCCL), an esteemed institution of interior Sindh, continues to set new benchmarks in fostering excellence. The institution proudly celebrated its 1st Annual Parents Day, in collaboration with Cadet College Larkana (CCL). This momentous occasion gathered parents, faculty, staff, and esteemed guests to witness the cadets' exceptional growth in physical, intellectual, and moral domains.

This event marked a unique milestone in the history of SBBGCCL. The celebration was graced by Syed Abbas Hassan, the father of martyred ex-cadet Captain Haider Abbas, as the Chief Guest, making it both an emotional and proud occasion.

The Chief Guest was warmly welcomed upon his

arrival by The Esteemed Principal of SBBGCCL Prof. Saleem Raza Chaudhry accompanying The Founder Principal SBBGCCL/ Present Principal CCL Brig Retd Ghulam Raza who together escorted him to the venue. Here, he was enthusiastically greeted by faculty, staff, cadets, parents, and distinguished guests as well.

The event commenced with a disciplined parade, during which the Chief Guest received a smartly turned-out guard of honour. He also toured the science exhibition, appreciating the cadets' innovative projects. In his address, the Chief Guest Syed Abbas Hassan expressed his honour and deep emotions, remarking on the inclusion of the cadets of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Girls Cadet College which added vibrancy to the event.

The Chief Guest further shared his admiration for

the cadets' spirited parade, command display, and dynamic activities. He fondly stated that their energy and dedication reminded him of his late son, Captain Haider Abbas.

In his inspiring speech, he emphasized that the collaboration between Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Girls Cadet College Larkana and Cadet College Larkana stood as a symbol of hope and unity. The event demonstrated that both daughters and sons are equally equipped to shoulder the responsibility of building a prosperous and peaceful Pakistan.

The Chief Guest lauded the efforts of the cadets and commended their achievements throughout the year.

Anna House was declared the champion house at Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Girls Cadet College Larkana (SBBGCCL).

Chief Cadet Captain Aliza Mutahir of Shaheed

Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Girls Cadet College Larkana (SBBGCCL) was recognized as the Best Cadet of the Year.

Shah Baharo House was declared the champion house at Cadet College Larkana.

Chief Cadet Captain Mubshir Aijaz of Cadet College Larkana was recognized as the Best Cadet of the Year.

The Chief Guest also congratulated all prize winners and encouraged them to continue bringing laurels to their institutions.

Chief Guest also handed over the Champion flag to Anna House.

Parents, guests, and media praised the event for its outstanding organization. The historic gesture of inviting the father of a martyred cadet as Chief Guest was particularly noted, reflecting the institution's respect for the families of Shaheeds, whom they consider VVIPs of the nation.

Brigadier Ghulam Raza SI (M), Principal of Cadet College Larkana, highlighted the academic success of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Girls Cadet College Larkana (SBBGCCL). He shared that in the SSC Part II (Class X) Annual Examination 2024, conducted by BISE Larkana:

Total Cadets Enrolled: 49
Total Cadets Appeared: 49
Cadets Secured A1 Grade: 38
Cadets Secured A Grade: 10

This achievement underscores the institution's commitment to academic excellence and its cadets' dedication to their studies. Esteemed Principal of SBBGCCL Prof. Saleem Raza Chaudhry expressed his heartfelt gratitude to Principal Brigadier Ghulam Raza SI (M) for his unwavering support, leadership, and collaboration in hosting



the successful Parents Day event. He highlighted how this joint effort has strengthened the bond between both institutions and set a remarkable example of unity and cooperation.

The successful celebra-

tion of the 1st Annual Parents Day, 2024 of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Girls Cadet College Larkana is a testament to the visionary leadership and dedication of Esteemed Principal of SBBGCCL

Prof. Saleem Raza Chaudhry.

The 1st Annual Parents Day, 2024, was a remarkable success, underlining SBBGCCL's commitment to holistic education and national pride.



In brief

Under- 16 games starts in Larkana

LARKANA (APP): Free Under-16 Winter Coaching Camp 2024 was organized at MA Khuhro sports Complex Larkana on Tuesday under the special direction of Sindh Provincial Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Sardar Mohammad Bakhsh Khan Mahar. The camp will continue till 30 December. The winter coaching camp was inaugurated by, District Attorney Larkana Abdul Nabi Sayrio, District Sports Officer Larkana Muhammad Mahfooz Makani. In the coaching camp, qualified coaches trained boys and girls up to 16 years of age in Football, Table Tennis, Badminton, Takowando. A large number of students participated in the event with their coaches.

Kohat Aman Football League starts

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sports Department, under Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's "Awami Agenda" Program has formally launched first Deputy Commissioner Kohat Aman Football League on Tuesday in Tribal Sub Division (TSD) Darra Adam Khel (DAK) District Kohat. The inaugural ceremony of the League was held at the ground of Government Degree College Dara Adam Khel and attended by Commanding Officer 136 Wing, Alamgir Khan as a Chief Guest. The opening match of the league was played between Zarghun Khel and Jawaki and won by the later through a penalty shootout after a fierce competition. Meanwhile, a gymnastics Show was also held in which the athletes showed their wonderful skills which was greatly appreciated by the audience. The local people have warmly welcomed the holding of the Deputy Commissioner Kohat Aman Football League saying that this it would promote healthy activities and provide players a platform to showcase their skills.

India consider second spinner for Boxing Day Test

MELBOURNE (AFP): India captain Rohit Sharma was coy Tuesday on how his team will line up for the Boxing Day Test against Australia, with the option of a second spinner on the table. Temperatures are forecast to reach 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) on Thursday, and the Melbourne Cricket Ground curator said during the week he expected the pitch to offer plenty for the fast bowlers. But Rohit left the door open to a second spinner. "Whatever we have to do to make the best possible XI in these conditions, we will do that -- whether that is playing an extra spinner or not," he said. With off-spinning all-rounder Ravichandran Ashwin announcing his immediate retirement from international cricket after the third Test in Brisbane, Ravindra Jadeja is expected to keep his place. Washington Sundar is the other spin option. India has been carried this series by pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, who has tormented Australia almost single-handedly, with the other quicks not offering as much menace. Speedster Akash Deep replaced the underperforming Harshit Rana in Brisbane and is set to play again along with Mohammed Siraj and Nitish Kumar Reddy should the second spin option not be taken. Despite their lacklustre performance, Rohit defended the pace attack.



FAISALABAD: Players in action during the hockey match between Paradies Hockey Club and Shahbaz Senior Hockey Club at the 2nd CoAS Inter Club National Hockey Championship 2024.

Stallions, Markhors set to lock horns in Champions T20 Cup final

RAWALPINDI (APP): Top-notch ABL Stallions and UMT Markhors are set to affirm Pakistan's inclination to adopt fiery and robust style of T20 cricket as they face off in the final of the Bahria Town Champions T20 Cup final in Rawalpindi on Wednesday. Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has devised the idea of the Champions Cup to not only find new talent but also groom those who have been excelling at the domestic level but are yet to reach the international standards. The first of such events was successfully held in the 50-over format in Faisalabad in September this year. The Bahria Town Champions T20 Cup targeted a new and aggressive style of T20 cricket which the top teams have adopted and it also kick-started Pakistan's preparation for the upcoming white-ball mega events including the ICC Champions Trophy and the ICC T20 World Cup in 2026. After intense and interesting 20 matches plus the Qualifier, ABL Stallions and UMT Markhors qualified for the final, who will vie for the Trophy and a prize pot of PKR 25 million. Both the finalists won six of their eight matches with two defeats each but ABL Stallions cruised into the final with a better net run-rate of 0.805 to UMT Markhors' 0.606. Misbah-ul-Haq mentored UMT Markhors beat Nurpur Lions in the Qualifiers. The two teams shared a match each in the double league phase, with Stallions winning the first by 29 runs and losing the next by three runs. That



sets both the teams intriguingly placed for the final. Stallions captain Mohammad Haris described the campaign as a "topsy-turvy one." "Overall the team's journey has been good with its ups and down," said Haris on the eve of the final. "Boys have got good chances and I have learnt a lot of things under team mentor Shoaib Malik." Haris singled out Maaz Sadaqat, Shamyul Hussain and Mehran Mumtaz as some of the exciting youngsters in the squad, hoping hard work will take them to places. Rival skipper Iftikhar Ahmed said the aim was to improve the style of play and to feed aggressive players to the Pakistan team. "We have overcome challenges and have tried to adopt new styles of T20 cricket which are prevalent at the international level and that was told to us by

our mentor Misbah-ul-Haq," said Iftikhar. "We have several good performances with Akif Javed bowling exceptionally well. Khawaja Mohammad Nafay is a new and exciting talent with Saad Masood also impressive with his skills. "Credit to Misbah and the staff for helping us and this has been a good tournament, long enough to give maximum opportunities to young players." Some powerful striking has been seen in the event with Abdul Samad (strike-rate 169.11), Haider Ali (161.53), Hussain Talat (156.56), Mohammad Haris (153.08) and Khushdil Shah (151.72) -- a marked improvement in the powerful batting, so much needed at the international level. All-rounder Hussain Talat has anchored Stallions's batting with a

hundred in his aggregate of 310 at an impressive strike rate of 156 while experienced Fakhar Zaman topped the chart for Markhors with 283 runs coming at a strike rate of 138.73. Stallions can boast of fast bowler Mohammad Ali who is top on the bowlers' list with 19 wickets in eight matches while Nisar Ahmed of Markhors is third on the list with 15 wickets in nine matches. The two teams have enough firepower in all three departments, promising a mouth-watering final. ABL Stallions road to final: 7 Dec -- beat Panthers by 35 runs 8 Dec -- beat Lions by 12 runs 12 Dec -- lost to Markhors by three runs 13 Dec -- beat Dolphins by five runs 15 Dec -- beat Panthers by six wickets 17 Dec -- lost to Lions by three wickets 20 Dec -- beat Markhors by 29 runs 21 Dec -- beat Dolphins by six wickets UMT Markhors road to final: 7 Dec -- beat Lions by four wickets 10 Dec -- beat Dolphins by two wickets 12 Dec -- beat Stallions by three runs 13 Dec -- lost to Panthers by six wickets 15 Dec -- beat Lions by three wickets 18 Dec -- beat Dolphins by eight wickets 20 Dec -- lost to Stallions by 29 runs 21 Dec -- beat Panthers by six wickets 23 Dec -- Qualifier -- beat Lions by 29 runs.

Amorim vows to stay on course despite Rashford row



LONDON (AFP): Ruben Amorim has insisted he knows what he's doing as the Manchester United manager looks to revive the fallen English giants amid a row over the future of Marcus Rashford. Amorim has had a rollercoaster ride since succeeding the sacked Erik ten Hag at Old Trafford. United enjoyed a late comeback win over local rivals Manchester City only to then slump to a 3-0 loss at home to Bournemouth last week-end following a midweek 4-3 League Cup quarter-final defeat by Tottenham. Rashford was omitted from all three of those games, with the 27-year-old, a product of the United youth system, now looking increasingly likely to leave Old Trafford. The struggling England international fuelled speculation about his own future by saying he was "ready for a new challenge" in a midweek interview. But Amorim, speaking ahead of the Boxing Day match away to Wolves, said nothing had changed from

his point of view. "Normal situation," he said. "When I feel that it's the right moment I will change something. Until then I will continue to think what is the best for the team. "I speak with him (Rashford) every day. Not about the interview, about the performance." Amorim added Rashford "wants to play, he is trying" but "it's my decision, only my decision". "I spoke with a lot of players -- individually, during training -- so I'm trying to do things... I am doing things my way," the Portuguese boss said. "And it's the only way I know. "If I don't do that I will lose myself and I will not lose myself. I know what I'm doing." Amorim questioned the "choices" of people surrounding Rashford after omitting him from the Bournemouth match, when Gary Neville said the forward leaving felt like an "inevitable ending". The former United captain also called it a "distraction for the manager" -- something Amorim denied Tuesday. "No, I don't think

so," he said. "Not for me, not for the other players because everybody is there every day during training, so they understand and that is the key point. "For the media and for the other people, I cannot control that. "But I'm really focused and they know, I'm so clear in my message, everybody in Carrington know what I'm talking about and what I want from Marcus and everybody else. "So, it's not a distraction for us. Maybe it's for the media but that is not my concern." 'Responsibility' Amorim, asked what more he would like to see from Rashford, replied: "Like any other player, the best that they can be. "If you have big talents, big performance, big responsibility, big engagement, like push forward everybody in this moment. And some guys have a big responsibility here because they are here for a long time." United are a lowly 13th in the table ahead of Thursday's match against a team managed by Amorim's compatriot Vitor Pereira, who is taking charge of his first match at Molineux fresh from leading Wolves to a 3-0 win at Leicester. "I understand that it's a tough moment, and it's on me," said Amorim. "Since the first day that I arrived, it's on me because I'm responsible for the team...We just have to think about improving, to understand the context and not focus on what happened in the past."

Pakistan-born Australian cricketer signs up for PSL 10



LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): The season 10 of the forthcoming Pakistan Super League (PSL) has also taken center stage ahead of its drafting on January 11 in Gwadar. According to details, Pakistan-born Australian batter Usman Khawaja had signed for the domestic premium tournament. Previously, he had represented Islamabad United in the PSL. The household names from the different countries had confirmed their signings in the brandnew season of the marquee tournament. Jason Roy and David Willey had already signed up for the PSL. Preparations for Pakistan Super League (PSL) season 10 gained momentum as the international players began registering for the draft. England batter Jason Roy confirmed his participation in the PSL draft, for the upcoming season. Roy had previously played for Quetta Gladiators and contributed significantly to their campaign.

South Africa opt for all-pace attack against Pakistan

CENTURION (AFP): South African captain Temba Bavuma on Tuesday announced an all-pace attack for the first Test against Pakistan starting at SuperSport Park in Centurion on Thursday. The two-match series is crucial for South Africa, who will qualify for next year's World Test Championship final if they win one of the matches. "We back our seamers at Centurion," Bavuma said at his pre-match press conference. Fast bowler Corbin Bosch will make his debut for a team missing several leading pace bowlers because of injury. He plays for the Titans provincial team whose home ground is at Centurion. Bosch, 30, is the son of the late Tertius Bosch, who played in South Africa's first post-isolation Test, against the West Indies in Barbados in 1992. "He will be playing at the venue where he has made a name for himself in the provincial set-up," said Bavuma. "He adds that element of extra pace. He's a big, strong guy who hits the deck hard and he offers a role with the bat as well." Bosch bowled at more

than 140kmh (87mph) when he made his one-day international debut against Pakistan in Johannesburg on Sunday and hit 40 not out as a lower-order batsman. Bavuma said his players were aware of the significance of being on the verge of reaching the world championship final. "We know what's at stake. There's confidence and belief because of the good cricket we have played over the last while. Nothing has happened by accident." South Africa's progress in the Test championship final has come despite Cricket South Africa's deliberate downgrading of Test cricket to accommodate a high-profile Twenty20 franchise series. South Africa's schedule of 12 Tests -- all in two-match series -- is the joint lowest with Bangladesh in the championship cycle. England have played 22 matches, while Australia and India will have played 19 each when they complete their fixtures. The system of average points has propelled South Africa to the top of the table despite virtually forfeiting a series in New Zealand when coach Shukri

Conrad was prevented from selecting any players contracted to the SA20 league. South Africa did not play against Australia or England and their only series against one of the "big three" Test nations was a tied one against India. Pakistan have only won two out of 15 Tests in South Africa but will go into the series on the back of a convincing 3-0 one-day series win. Seven of the Pakistan squad and eight of the South African Test team players were involved in the one-day games. Teams: South Africa: Temba Bavuma (captain), Aiden Markram, Tony de Zorzi, Ryan Rickelton, Tristan Stubbs, David Bedingham, Kyle Verreynne (wkt), Marco Jansen, Corbin Bosch, Kagiso Rabada, Dane Paterson. Pakistan (from): Shan Masood (captain), Saud Shakeel, Aamir Jamal, Abdullah Shafique, Babar Azam, Haseebullah Khan, Kamran Ghulam, Khurram Shahzad, Mir Hamza, Mohammad Abbas, Mohammad Rizwan (wkt), Naseem Shah, Noman Ali, Saim Ayub, Salman Ali Agha.

Guardiola adamant Man City slump not all about Haaland

LONDON (AFP): Pep Guardiola has insisted Erling Haaland alone is not responsible for Manchester City's dramatic collapse in form this season. The Premier League champions, on an unprecedented run of four successive English titles, saw their campaign go from bad to worse with a 2-1 loss at Aston Villa on Saturday -- their ninth defeat in 12 matches in all competitions. The reverse also marked previously prolific striker Haaland's fifth game without a goal in six matches. After the game, the Norway international told TNT Sports: "First I'm looking at myself. I haven't been scoring my chances. I have to do better. I haven't been good enough."

City manager Guardiola subsequently defended Haaland, who has scored 108 times for the club since joining in 2022 by saying that "without him we will be even worse" and that "he needs to be delivered the right balls in the right spots". Guardiola stuck to his theme on Tuesday during a pre-match press conference ahead of Thursday's Boxing Day match at home to Everton. "It's about us, not just one player," he said. "When in the past we score goals and Erling was so prolific, helping us, it was because of the team. "And when you have problems at the back, in the middle, it is for everyone, it is a team, it is not about one player. It would be easy, if it was just one player, the reason why. It's not about that."

The Catalan boss added: "Erling is so important for us, will be so important for us, has been. (We have to) try to do things better, to use him better." "In this situation, this tendency for all of us (is to say) 'the reason why (is this one, and this one and this one'. It's about us, about everyone. "The guys are running, making effort more than ever. All the tendency 'it's because we don't run, because we don't fight, the reason why is this situation or this player or this manager'. It's not about that. "It's many little details or big details that make all together not as good as we were. But we have another opportunity on Boxing Day."

Embiid ejected in Sixers' win over Spurs, Magic beat Boston

NEW YORK (APP): Philadelphia's Joel Embiid was ejected after confronting a woman referee in the 76ers' 111-106 victory over San Antonio in a wild Monday of NBA action. An expected big-man showdown between Cameroonian Embiid and France's Victor Wembanyama ended late in the first half, leaving Tyrese Maxey to produce 32 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists in sparking the win. "It's big time," Maxey said of getting the win for Embiid. "We're learning to play without him... We've got to change the game, come a little faster, play a little harder and gain rebounds." Embiid came onto the court after the game and hugged Maxey after the guard's late surge with a steal, dunk, 3-pointer and free throw in a game-ending 9-3 win to deliver the home triumph. "It's love, man," Maxey said. "That has been my big brother for a long time." Chaos started 3:47 into the second period when Wembanyama tumbled to the court after contact with Philadelphia's Andre Drummond, who was ejected for a second technical foul. It was later overturned upon a video review to a "Wemby" flop foul, allowing Drummond back into the game. Embiid was whistled for his third foul by referee Jenna Schroeder after charging into Wembanyama with 2:59 remaining in the first half and, after heated complaints to her, Embiid was issued two technical fouls and ejected. That sparked even more ire from Embiid, who ripped off the facial protective mask he wore for a sinus fracture and yelled his displeasure while being physically restrained from confronting the officials.



He exited after only nine points in 14 minutes. "It was a wild first half," 76ers coach Nick Nurse said. NBA blocked shots leader Wembanyama finished with 26 points, nine rebounds and eight blocked shots for the Spurs. He swatted away four in the first quarter, three in its final 30 seconds, on his way to a career-best seven in the first half. An injury-hit Orlando Magic squad stunned the reigning NBA champion Boston Celtics 108-104, with German Tristan da Silva's 18 points leading a balanced attack for the hosts to pull off the upset despite 35 points for Boston by Jaylen Brown. "This one's for Mo," said Orlando's Johnathan Isaac, paying tribute to center Mo Wagner, who suffered a season-ending left knee injury on Saturday. NBA season leader Cleveland improved to 26-4, matching the best 30-game start in club history, with a 124-113 home victory over Utah. The Cavs, on a five-game win streak, improved to 16-1 at home as Darius Garland had 23 points while Donovan Mitchell and Evan Mobley each added 22. - Thunder streak at eight - Host Oklahoma City's win streak stretched to eight games with a 123-105 victory over NBA-worst Washington. Shai Gilgeous-Alexander led the Western Conference-best Thunder (23-5) with 41 points. A week before his 40th

birthday, LeBron James delivered his 120th career triple double with 28 points, 11 rebounds and 11 assists but he missed a 3-pointer at the final buzzer and the Los Angeles Lakers lost to visiting Detroit 117-114. At New York, Karl-Anthony Towns and O.G. Anunoby each scored 31 points to lead the host Knicks over Toronto 139-125. With NBA scoring leader Giannis Antetokounmpo out with back spasms and Damian Lillard sidelined by illness, the Milwaukee Bucks won 112-91 at Chicago behind 21 points each by Kris Middleton and Brook Lopez. Houston's Jabari Smith scored 21 points and Fred VanVleet added 20 to lead the Rockets over host Charlotte 114-101. Trae Young scored 29 points to lead host Atlanta over Minnesota 117-104 while Bam Adebayo scored 23 points to lead the Miami Heat in a 110-95 home triumph over Brooklyn. Norman Powell scored 29 points to lead the visiting Los Angeles Clippers to a 114-110 victory at Memphis. Powell sank a jumper and made two free throws in the final 25 seconds to deliver the triumph. Luka Doncic scored 27 points to lead the Dallas Mavericks over visiting Portland 132-108 while Nikola Jokic had 32 points to power the Denver Nuggets over visiting Phoenix 117-90.



In brief

RPO holds Christmas cake cutting ceremony

RAWALPINDI (APP): Regional Police Officer Rawalpindi Babar Sarfaraz Alpa on Thursday held a special cake cutting ceremony in connection with the upcoming Christmas festival. Besides Deputy Inspector General Malik Naeem Akhtar and other staff, all the Christian employees posted at the Regional Police Office attended the ceremony, a police spokesman said. Speaking on the occasion, RPO Alpa said the Rawalpindi Region Police shared the happiness of its Christian employees who were fulfilling their responsibilities to the fullest. The Christian community members, he added, were hardworking and dutiful, who were performing their duties in all important institutions of Pakistan with honesty and dedication. Expressing best wishes to the Christian employees, the RPO distributed cash prizes among them. Later, the ADIG along with the Christian employees cut the Christmas cake. The Christian employees on the occasion thanked the RPO for organizing the ceremony.

IRSA releases 38,200 cusecs water

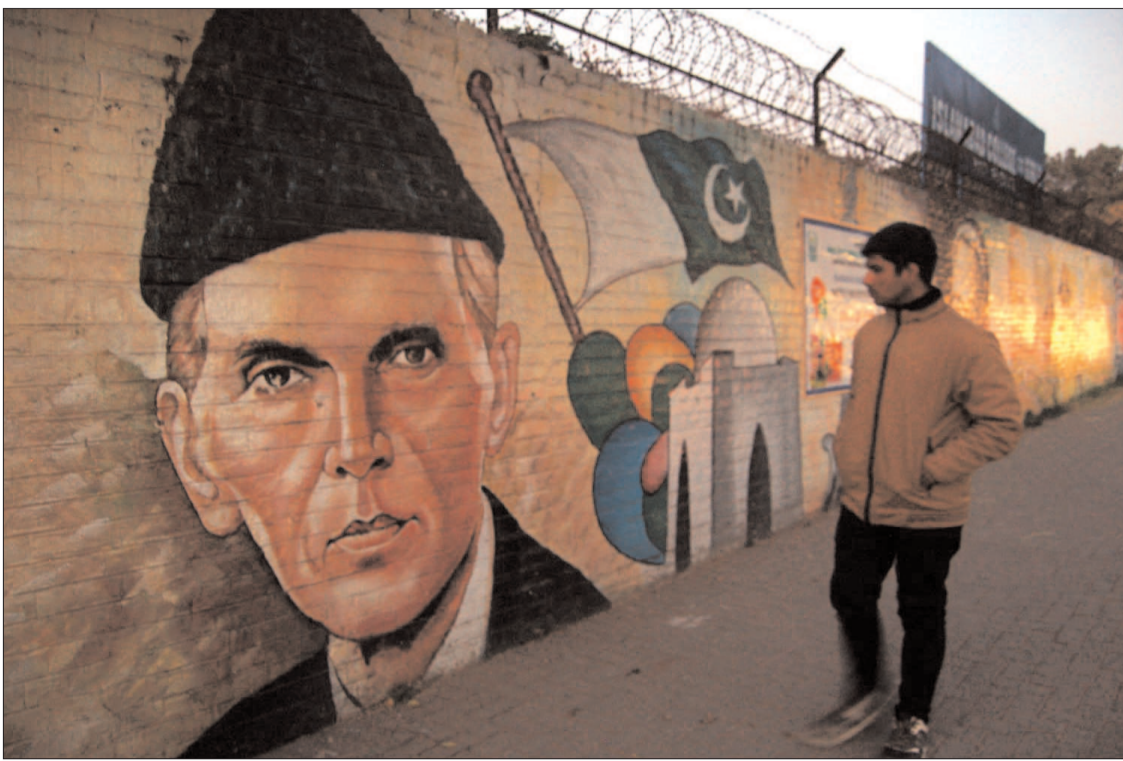
ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Tuesday released 38,200 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 40,000 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1470.76 feet and was 72.76 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 17,300 cusecs and 18,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1132.15 feet, which was 83.15 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 6,500 cusecs and 4,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 36,800, 26,900, 22,300 and 1,100 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 11,500 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 1,700 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

ANF recovers 26 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting four operations managed to recover over 26 kg drugs worth Rs 6.8 million and arrested five accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Tuesday. He informed that 18 kg hashish was recovered from the secret cavities of a vehicle intercepted near Mandra Toll Plaza Islamabad and two accused including a woman were arrested. 5 kg ice was recovered from a vehicle near Kot Abdul Malik Interchange in Lahore and an accused was arrested. In third operation, 2 kg heroin was recovered from a woman netted in Jamshoro Hyderabad. In fourth operation, 1.2 kg hashish was recovered from an accused held near Srinagar Highway Islamabad. Cases have been registered against the arrested accused under the Narcotics Control Act and further investigations are under process.

Police arrest drug dealer

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi District Police while conducting a raid managed to arrest a drug dealer and recovered 9920 grams charras from his possession, said a police spokesman on Tuesday. He said, Pirwadhai police in an operation against drug dealers arrested an accused namely Nasir Mehmood and recovered 9920 grams charras.



ISLAMABAD: A youngster walk past near picture of father of the nation Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah as Pakistan nation celebrating 76 years birth anniversary Quaid. —INP Photo

NA Speaker praises Christian community's role in national development

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq on Tuesday commended the Christian community's role in Pakistan's development and prosperity, highlighting their invaluable contributions in various sectors, especially in education and healthcare. Extending warm felicitation to the Christian community on the eve of Christmas, he remarked that the Christian community is an integral part of Pakistan's diverse society, and their role in the nation's progress is praise-worthy. He said that Hazrat Isa (AS) is an exalted & revered Prophet of Allah, and his birth anniversary is a source of happiness and blessing for all. He further emphasized that Hazrat Isa (AS) taught the values of

peace, tolerance, brotherhood, and service to humanity.

He added that Christmas teaches us lessons of unity, tolerance, and fraternity, which are essential for the development and stability of society. He further stated that by following the teachings of Hazrat Isa (AS), we can promote interfaith harmony.

Ayaz Sadiq asserted that the Constitution of Pakistan guarantees the protection of the rights of all citizens, regardless of their creed, religion, or ethnicity, and provides them with the freedom to live according to their beliefs and practices.

He also mentioned that the Parliament is committed to ensuring the protection of citizens' rights and providing equal opportunities in all sectors of life

through effective legislation.

Deputy Speaker National Assembly, Syed Mir Ghulam Mustafa Shah, also extended Christmas greetings to the Christian community.

He affirmed that the Parliament is resolutely committed to enacting effective legislation for the protection of minority rights and their betterment. He noted that citizens from all religious backgrounds are playing an admirable role in the nation's development and progress.

He further added that, in line with the vision of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the government is firmly committed to provide complete freedom to people of all religions to live according to their customs and beliefs.

Mohsin Naqvi meets Khalid Siddiqui

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi met with MQM Chairman and Federal Minister Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui. During the meeting, they exchanged views on matters of mutual interest and the overall situation in the country. Both leaders also discussed ways to provide relief to the public and finding lasting solutions to problems.

Mohsin Naqvi said that Pakistan is coming out of difficult circumstances and the economic indicators are improving. He added that every passing day is promising brighter future for Pakistan. He emphasized that disappointment is a sin and those who spread despair have a different agenda. MQM Chairman Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui said that those who try to hinder Pakistan's progress do not care about the people.

KP Governor, Russian Envoy discuss cooperation, regional challenges

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Russian Ambassador to Pakistan, Albert P Khorev, met Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Governor Faisal Karim Kundi at the Governor House Camp Office here on Tuesday.

The meeting focused on strengthening bilateral ties, addressing regional issues, and exploring economic opportunities. Governor Kundi highlighted ongoing development and climate change projects in KP.

He emphasized Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) commitment to dialogue and legislative progress, saying the party's opposition to politics rooted in agitation.

He proposed a Governors Conference to discuss national progress and stability. Addressing law and order issues in Kurram Agency, the Governor expressed concerns over recent sectarian violence. He assured that law enforcement agencies were working to restore peace, with inter-provincial coordination underway to assist relief efforts.

He also acknowledged the role of the Red Crescent in providing daily meals and support to 300 to 500 affected families. A jirga has been convened to encourage dialogue and promote peace in the region. Governor Kundi told about All Parties Conference (APC) to address KP's security challenges and discuss the province's untapped mineral resources.

The Russian Ambassador assured support for ongoing relief efforts in Kurram district. Ambassador Khorev praised the progress of the

Pakistan-Russia Intergovernmental Commission (IGC) on Trade, Economic, Scientific, and Technical Cooperation. The meeting concluded with Governor Kundi presenting a shield to the Ambassador as a goodwill gesture. The discussions reinforced a shared commitment to regional development and stronger ties between Russia and Pakistan.

Australian High Commissioner, KP Governor discuss regional ties, challenges

ISLAMABAD (APP): Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan Neil Hawkins and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Governor Faisal Karim Kundi met on Tuesday at the Governor House Camp Office to discuss bilateral relations, regional development, and key issues impacting the province. During the meeting, the two dignitaries explored opportunities for collaboration between Australia and Pakistan, focusing on mutual interests. Governor Kundi briefed Hawkins on development and climate change projects underway in KP, which received positive acknowledgment from the High Commissioner.

The Governor highlighted the ongoing Benazir Income Support Programme, which aims to alleviate poverty in the province. He also mentioned the active role of the Red Crescent (NGO), which has been engaged in

welfare initiatives in KP.

Law and order challenges were a key point of discussion. Governor Kundi expressed concerns about the worsening situation in Kurram Agency due to sectarian violence over recent weeks. He assured Hawkins that law enforcement agencies were making efforts to restore normalcy. In this regard, the Governor was also coordinating with other provinces for relief activities in KP.

The Governor detailed relief efforts in Kurram, where the Red Crescent has been distributing cooked meals, including breakfast, to 300-500 affected families daily. Additionally, the Governor emphasized the importance of dialogue in resolving conflicts, noting that a jirga had been convened to promote peace. An All-Parties Conference (APC) was also organized under the Governor's leadership to address law and order concerns across the province and discuss strategies for harnessing KP's mineral resources.

Meanwhile, Governor Kundi asked the Australian High Commissioner for scholarship opportunities for students from KP, emphasizing the need to invest in education for the region's youth. Concluding the meeting, the Governor presented the High Commissioner with traditional gifts, including a traditional cap, a shawl, and a shield, as a gesture of goodwill. This meeting underlined the commitment of both sides to strengthen bilateral relations and address key regional challenges collaboratively.

5500 cops to be deployed to ensure security on Christmas

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, while Rawalpindi district police have finalized security arrangements and 5500 policemen will be deployed to ensure security at churches and public places.

Rawalpindi District Police have devised a foolproof security plan to avoid any untoward situation on the occasion of Christmas. 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.

He said the security duty at public places, including parks, would be made more effective, 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 the 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. 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.

In churches, special services would take place where prayers would be offered for peace, progress, and the prosperity of the country. 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.

The cake-cutting ceremonies were held here at Police Lines, WASA, MCR, and in other departments in connection with Christmas celebrations.

The main attractions of the Christmas festival include traditions like Christmas trees, Santa Claus, carols, and gifts, which add charm to the festivity. The main ritual of the Christmas celebration is the decoration of Christmas trees to welcome the arrival of Santa Claus, also known as Christmas Father. It has been observed that a number of shopping malls and hotels in Rawalpindi have installed decked Christmas trees to attract visitors, especially children.

FJWU celebrates exceptional rise in QS world rankings

RAWALPINDI (APP): Fatima Jinnah Women University (FJWU) has achieved a remarkable milestone in the QS World University Rankings: Asia 2025, solidifying its position as the top women's university in Pakistan.

FJWU proudly ranks 34th among all Higher Education Institutions in Pakistan, 140th in Southern Asia, and within the 501-520 band in Asia. These achievements underscore FJWU's unwavering dedication to quality education, innovation, and empowering women to excel on a global stage.

According to a FJWU spokesperson, the university's success is a testament to the relentless efforts of its faculty, staff, and students, who have fostered a culture of academic excellence and innovation. With

its mission to shape empowered, ambitious women, FJWU continues to lead by example, creating opportunities for personal and professional growth, said said.

She further informed that in another exciting development, FJWU has officially opened admissions for the spring 2025 semester, inviting female students to apply for a wide range of Bachelor's, M.Phil., and Ph.D. programs at its City Campus (Rawalpindi) and Chakri Campus.

The application deadline is January 6, 2025, and the merit list will be published on the university website in the second week of January 2025.

Under the visionary leadership of Vice Chancellor Dr Bushra Mirza T.I., FJWU continues

to provide a world-class education with a highly qualified faculty, many of whom hold foreign degrees. Both campuses offer a dynamic academic environment, equipping students with the skills and knowledge to thrive in today's rapidly changing professional landscape.

FJWU is committed to supporting its students through scholarships, career counseling, and internship opportunities.

Its Career Development Centre plays a vital role in connecting the students with internships and job placements, both locally and internationally, ensuring they are well-prepared for future challenges.

Aspiring students are encouraged to seize the opportunity to join FJWU, an institution dedicated to empowering women



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior, Mohsin Naqvi in a meeting with Chairman MQM and Federal Minister Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui. —APP Photo

DIG vows foolproof security for Christmas celebrations

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Police Syed Ali Raza assured the Christian community of comprehensive security measures for Christmas during a meeting held on Tuesday with a delegation from the community.

During the meeting, DIG Raza assured the delegation that the Islamabad Police is taking all necessary steps to ensure the safety of the Christian community and their religious events, a public relation officer told APP. He said DIG emphasized that comprehensive security will continue to be provided for programs held at their places of worship.

DIG stated that the purpose of the meeting was to reassure the Christian community that Islamabad Police is always available for their security and considers itself accountable for their protection. He added that all churches in Islamabad are being provided with foolproof security. Additionally, DIG Raza acknowledged the Christian community's cooperation with Islamabad Police and expressed hope for continued collaboration in the future. The Christian community delegation thanked DIG Islamabad for addressing their concerns and ensuring full support for their security needs.

Ministry holds meeting to review progress on 'Character Education Initiative'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training on Tuesday holds a meeting on implementing the Character Education Initiative "Building a Nation of Values through Character Education Forward".

The session was chaired by Federal Secretary Muhyuddin Ahmad Wani and attended by prominent stakeholders, including Chairman National Rahmatul lil Aalameen Wa Khatamun Nabiyyin (NRKNA) Authority Nadeem, Chairman Character Education Foundation (CEF) Mahmood Ahmad, Directors of the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE), and the Director IBCC.

The Character Education Initiative, launched in Islamabad in August, focuses on embedding essential values like civic responsibility, honesty, fairness, decision-making, patience, and planning into the education system.

During the meeting, Suhail Bin Aziz, Director NRKNA presented a detailed briefing on the implementation process. He highlighted key

achievements, including the development of 15 booklets on various themes and the production of nine animated training videos for teacher training.

Multiple sessions with headteachers, teachers, and students have also been conducted, ensuring robust engagement. Plans are underway to digitize the material for broader dissemination, he added.

Riffat Jabeen, Director FDE, elaborated on the steps taken at the school level to embed character education into the curriculum. Schools have been provided with specific guidelines to integrate the themes meaningfully.

She emphasized that these efforts aim to create a lasting impact on students' moral and ethical development.

Federal Secretary Muhyuddin Ahmad Wani directed that schools utilize the zero hour for focused activities on character education. He emphasized that engaging children in interactive and creative activities is crucial for instilling these values effectively.

To ensure successful implementation, it was decided that a monitoring team would conduct on-ground evaluations, offer-

ing valuable insights for further improvements.

The initiative is expected to yield significant short-term outcomes, including improved student behavior, enhanced classroom environments, and increased student engagement.

In the long-term, the program aims to develop responsible, ethical, and compassionate citizens of Pakistan, who will contribute to a society rooted in values of integrity, fairness, and civic responsibility.

Chairman CEF Mr. Mahmood Ahmad pledged his organization's support for the parenting initiative, which is aligned with the broader goals of character education.

Chairman NRKNA Mr. Khurshid Nadeem reaffirmed his commitment to advancing this initiative in line with the Authority's mandate and the vision of Secretary Wani.

The meeting concluded with a shared resolve among all participants to make the Character Education Initiative a cornerstone of national education, ensuring the holistic development of students and fostering a generation rooted in ethical and civic values.

22 projects inaugurated

BADAKHSHAN (BNA): Twenty-two small-scale construction projects aimed at managing agricultural water have been completed and inaugurated in Badakhshan. Mawlawi Amanullah Hassan, Head of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock in Badakhshan, told Bakhtar News Agency that these projects, funded by the Norwegian Committee at a cost of over 39 million Afghanis, were implemented in coordination with the provincial agriculture department.

Salang Pass reopens to traffic

KABUL (Amu TV): The Salang Pass, a critical roadway linking northern and southern Afghanistan, has reopened to traffic, the Taliban-led Ministry of Public Works announced on Tuesday. According to a statement from the ministry, both small and large passenger vehicles are now permitted to travel in both directions during daylight hours. Freight trucks will be allowed to cross the pass on a rotating schedule, with north-to-south movement authorized on Tuesday.

Taliban begin removing banned books in Jawzjan



JAWZJAN (Amu TV): The Taliban have launched a campaign to confiscate “banned books” in the city of Sheberghan, the center of the northern province of Jawzjan, as part of what they say is an effort to safeguard Islamic values and prevent the spread of “misleading content.”

Baryali Ahmadi, the head of information at the Taliban’s Directorate of Information and Culture in Jawzjan, said the initiative aims to protect “Islamic values, Afghan culture, and public awareness” by removing publications deemed incompatible with the country’s traditions and religion.

Books that conflict with “the teachings of Islam and the culture of the Afghan people” will be seized from libraries across the province, Ahmadi said. He added that the campaign would continue in the coming days to identify and collect materials considered “contrary to Islamic and cultural values.”

This latest move follows widespread reports of the Taliban confiscating books from libraries and universities across Afghanistan. Critics say the campaign reflects the group’s broader efforts to suppress dissenting ideas and tighten control over public discourse.

UNHCR in Nangarhar ceased operations

JALALABAD (Khaama Press): Afghanistan’s local media outlets report that the UNHCR office in Nangarhar, in the east of the country, has ceased operations.

According to the report the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) office in Nangarhar province has ceased its operations.

Reports indicated on Tuesday, the UNHCR office in Jalalabad was closed a few days ago.

It also stated that the office’s activities were halted due to a lack of funding, leaving many vulnerable populations without critical support.

The UNHCR in Afghanistan has not issued any statement regarding the closure of its office in Nangarhar or the reasons behind it.

The office had been providing cash assistance to Afghan refugees returning from Pakistan, a vital lifeline for many struggling families.

In a related development, reports indicated in Kandahar that the Taliban leader has accused international organizations of espionage and emphasized halting their operations in Afghanistan.

The closure of the UNHCR office in Nangarhar highlights the increasing challenges faced by international aid organizations operating in Afghanistan. Funding shortages and political restrictions are severely impacting the delivery of essential humanitarian services.

With the suspension of international aid operations and growing accusations against aid agencies, the plight of refugees and vulnerable populations in Afghanistan is worsening. Immediate international collaboration is needed to address these critical gaps and ensure that life-saving support continues to reach those in need.

Italy pledges 4.5m in aid to Afghanistan

KABUL (Amu TV): Italy has donated 4.5 million to the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund, managed by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Italian Embassy in Afghanistan announced on Tuesday.

In a statement, the embassy said the contribution, approved by Italy’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, aims to support UN agencies in delivering swift and effective responses to Afghanistan’s ongoing humanitarian crisis.

“Italy remains committed to supporting humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan to ensure that the urgent needs of its people are met,” the statement read. Last week, Italy announced an additional 3.5 million in funding for the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to assist vulnerable returnees and internally displaced persons in Afghanistan.

The contributions reflect Italy’s ongoing engagement with international efforts to address Afghanistan’s deteriorating humanitarian conditions amid growing challenges faced by millions of Afghans.

Economic experts agree that the uncontrolled import of foreign goods is a major factor in the decline of domestic industries.

Gulab Haidari, an economic expert, explained, “The domestic industry in the country is not strong enough to compete with similar imported goods. If the government does not act, it will cause serious damage to local industries.”

Meanwhile, Information and Culture Department officials also emphasize the importance of fostering and strengthening domestic industries.

Maulvi Hamidullah Ghyasi, an official of the department, called on citizens to support local production, saying, “Public cooperation and the use of local products will lead to the growth and support of these trades.”

Currently, only a few blacksmith shops remain operational in Herat. Once a pillar of the city’s economy, blacksmithing now relies on greater support from both the government and the public to survive.

Hanafi stresses strengthening ties

KABUL (BNA): The Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs emphasized expanding and strengthening relations between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, particularly in trade and investment, during a meeting with the Uzbek Ambassador to Kabul.

According to a statement from the ARG, Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi, the Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, met yesterday, evening with Aybek Arif Usmanov, Uzbekistan’s Ambassador to Kabul.

In this meeting, Ambassador Usmanov expressed

satisfaction with the cordial relations between the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and Uzbekistan. He stated that his government seeks to enhance economic and trade ties with Afghanistan.

Usmanov highlighted that Uzbek traders and investors are ready to cooperate and invest in various sectors, including establishing healthcare centers, importing medicines, setting up cement factories, and purchasing and trading coal in Afghanistan.

Mawlawi Hanafi appreciated the efforts of the Uzbek Ambassador in improving bilateral relations and welcomed the interest of Uzbek

traders and investors in Afghanistan’s economic and trade sectors.

He reiterated the Islamic Emirate’s commitment to providing all necessary facilities for traders and investors and emphasized the importance of strengthening relations between the two countries in various fields, particularly trade and investment.

It is worth mentioning that Mawlawi Hanafi had recently led a delegation to Uzbekistan, where he described the visit’s primary objective as enhancing relations and achieving mutual benefits for both nations.

Iran seeks investment, trade cooperation: Envoy

KABUL (TOLONews): The acting ambassador of Iran, Alireza Bikkdeli, in a meeting in Kabul, emphasized cooperation and addressed the challenges faced by traders, as well as the development of trade, economic, and transit relations between Kabul and Tehran.

Alireza Bikkdeli, during a meeting with the leadership of the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment, stated that joint investments and increased trade exchanges will enhance the economic dynamics of both countries.

The acting ambassador described Afghanistan as a long-time friend of Iran and stated: “We must work together to implement agreements. Alhamdulillah, our officials and the respected leaders of Afghanistan have achieved and will achieve good agreements during their visits to Iran. However, more important than reaching agreements is their implementation, which falls under the responsibility of the embassies and foreign ministries of both countries. The deputy minister will support my representation so that we can accomplish more.”

Officials of the Chamber of Commerce and Investment at the meeting described Iran as one of Afghanistan’s key economic and trade partners and expressed appreciation for Tehran’s cooperation in keeping ports open to Afghanistan’s export goods.



Mohammad Younus Momand, the first deputy of the chamber, highlighted the role of Chabahar Port in advancing trade and international transit between Afghanistan and the Gulf and India, and he called for the provision of further trade facilities for merchants at this port.

The first deputy of the Chamber of Commerce and Investment said during the meeting: “Over the years, whether it was Bandar Abbas, Chabahar, or other ports, they have never been closed to the people of Afghanistan, not even for a single day. I express my gratitude to the people of Iran.”

Meanwhile, Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai, the Deputy Minister of Political Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who was present at the meeting, described Iran as a good friend with shared religious, cultural, trade,

and transit ties with Afghanistan. He stressed the importance of unity among Asian countries, particularly Iran, China, and Afghanistan.

“Our doors are open to all Iranian traders. There are no obstacles in this regard. They can invest here after completing the legal processes in the ministries. Our expectation from Iran is the same: that national investors facilitate opportunities so they can invest within Iran and benefit from Iranian products,” said Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai.

According to statistics from the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, trade between Afghanistan and Iran in the first seven months of the current solar year amounted to \$1.827 billion, of which \$30 million constituted exports and the remainder imports.

Rise in kidney, urinary tract disease reported

HERAT (TOLONews): Officials at Herat Regional Hospital reported a significant increase in kidney and urinary tract diseases in the province.

According to data, nearly 150 patients visit the hospital’s urology department daily, some of whom require surgery or kidney transplants.

Ghulam Rabani Habibi, the head of the urology department, stated: “Initially, this department had five beds, which later increased to ten. However, since 2013, it has remained the same. Our case numbers are very high; in just one month, nearly 100 patients have undergone surgeries in this department.”

Abdullah, a 70-year-old patient who underwent kidney surgery four days ago said: “I had urinary problems for a long time and waited three months for surgery. Now, after the surgery, thank God, I am relieved.”

“An ultrasound revealed that my kidneys had been damaged for two years. I had pain, but I endured it,” said Another patient, Wakil Ahmad Rahmani, stated.

Patients and doctors complain about the lack of facilities in the department and the lengthy wait times for surgeries.

Doctors say many patients lose their kidneys due to lack of awareness and delays in seeking medical care.

Doctors attribute the increase in kidney diseases in Herat to low water intake, unhealthy eating habits, and consumption of soft drinks and energy drinks.

Nazir Ahmad Shakari, one of the doctors, said: “Patients often do not have a proper diet and do not consume enough fluids. Lack of awareness is a primary factor in the occurrence of kidney stones and other kidney problems.”

In addition to kidney diseases, the urology department at Herat Regional Hospital treats prostate and other urinary tract issues. However, due to limited resources, patients must wait up to four months for surgery.

Report highlights Afghanistan’s key economic developments

KABUL (TOLONews): The Economic Affairs Directorate of the Prime Minister’s Office released a quarterly report detailing various economic developments in Afghanistan.

The report highlights significant achievements, including a 14.50% increase in the value of the afghani against the dollar, the initiation of the 22.75 MW solar power project, contracts for the Toti gas field in Faryab, the Jawzjan cement factory, and the commencement of construction for 355 small water dams (check dams).

Abdul Rahman Habib, spokesperson for the

Ministry of Economy, told TOLONews: “The achievements mentioned in the report can contribute to self-sufficiency in industry, trade, transit, cement production, and energy. Additionally, storing rainwater and snow, along with replenishing groundwater resources, can promote agricultural development.”

The Chamber of Commerce and Investment has described the initiation of infrastructure projects as essential for improving the country’s economic situation.

It emphasized that the Islamic Emirate must provide further facilities to

boost investments in Afghanistan.

“Overall, our recommendation is to increase foreign investments in Afghanistan and create a suitable environment for Afghan investors as well, which would generate more job opportunities and have a positive impact on the people’s economy,” said Jan Aqa Nawid, spokesperson for the Chamber of Commerce and Investment.

“Major projects such as water dams, electricity projects, roads, and factories can play a crucial role in job creation, improving Afghanistan’s economic

situation, and strengthening the country’s infrastructure,” said Economic expert Qutbuddin Yaqubi.

The quarterly report by the Economic Affairs Directorate also incorporates public opinions gathered through the media. It further mentions that during this period, extraction and exploration of 21 large-scale mines worth 415 billion afghani have commenced, and a blanket manufacturing factory valued at approximately 930 million afghani, with a daily production capacity of 1,000 blankets and employment for 900 individuals, has been inaugurated.

Sheberghan to build modern townships near Qosh Tepa Canal

KABUL (TOLONews): The municipality of Sheberghan has announced that the construction of two residential townships, covering an area of 4,000 acres, will soon commence near the Qosh Tepa Canal.

According to this department, one of the townships will be located between the Mangiak and Aqcha districts, while the other will be situated in Khwaja-du-Koh district district, along the Qosh Tepa Canal.

These townships will be built to modern standards,

aiming to provide facilities for the local population and support farmers in Jowzjan province.

“These townships, covering a total area of 4,000 acres, will feature complete facilities and infrastructure. The township between Qarqin and Khumab districts will cover 2,000 acres and will be located near the Qosh Tepa Canal. Upon receiving approval, these projects will be operational,” said Habibullah Qane, the mayor of Sheberghan.

Residents of Jowzjan

welcomed the construction of these townships, considering it an effective step toward the country’s economic development.

“We fully support these projects. These initiatives will not only advance Jowzjan province but also contribute to the country’s development, encouraging our people to work and stay within Afghanistan,” said Jawed, a resident of Jowzjan.

“The construction of these two townships along the Qosh Tepa Canal is an excellent step that will lead

to the province’s progress and create job opportunities for young people,” said Gul Mohammad, another resident of Jowzjan.

Omid, a Jowzjan resident, said: “The townships being built near the Qosh Tepa Canal are among the most important infrastructure projects in Afghanistan and can bring significant benefits to the people.”

Previously, many residents of Balkh, Jowzjan, and Faryab provinces had called for the implementation of major infrastructure projects in these regions.

Herat blacksmiths struggling to keep local industry alive

HERAT CITY (Pajhwok): In a small forge in the heart of western Herat city, the capital of western Herat province, 49-year-old Ahmad Shah is striving to keep the blacksmithing industry alive.

For years, he has crafted durable iron tools, but now he watches helplessly as the market for his products has diminished. The import of cheap, low-quality foreign goods has not only reduced demand for his handmade tools, but has also pushed his trade to the brink of extinction.

With calloused hands and a weary voice, Ahmad

Shah urged authorities to support local industries and prevent the extinguishing of blacksmithing in the region. Speaking to Pajhwok Afghan News, he lamented, “For years, I have produced high-quality and long-lasting iron tools, but cheap, visually appealing, and low-quality foreign goods have taken over our market.”

He explained financial challenges of competing with foreign goods, saying, “A hatchet we produce costs around 100 afghanis to make, and we sell it for 130 afghanis. Yet, people prefer foreign products

over quality local tools. If this trend continues, our industry will face destruction.” Ahmad Shah is not alone in this struggle. Across his shop, fellow blacksmith Nasir Mohammadi shared similar frustrations. While hammering an iron piece, he spoke about the unrelenting hardships of their trade.

“Our market has grown cold,” Nasir said. “Life has become increasingly difficult, and even meeting basic living expenses is a struggle. Our work changes with the seasons, but with a stable market, we could fulfill many community

needs. We urge the government to limit the import of goods already produced locally in Herat.”

Economic experts agree that the uncontrolled import of foreign goods is a major factor in the decline of domestic industries.

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Currently, only a few blacksmith shops remain operational in Herat. Once a pillar of the city’s economy, blacksmithing now relies on greater support from both the government and the public to survive.

Japan contributes \$1.5m

KABUL (Amu TV): The Japanese government has pledged \$1.5 million to assist Afghan returnees, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) announced on Tuesday.

According to the IOM, the funds will support 5,000 returnees from Iran and Pakistan at border crossings including Milak, Islam Qala, Spin Boldak, and Torkham.

Services provided will

include temporary accommodation, hot meals, transportation, medical support, relief items, and cash assistance.

The IOM said the aid would also bolster economic resilience for thousands more, including returnees, internally displaced persons, and host communities in Nangarhar Province, where high unemployment and a fragile economy persist.

Miah Park, the IOM chief of mission in Afghanistan, highlighted the significance of Japan’s support.

“Japan’s longstanding commitment to IOM operations in Afghanistan enables us to reach those returning under vulnerable circumstances, often with little more than the clothes on their backs,” she said, expressing gratitude for the contribution.

GHAZNI (TOLONews): A flour production factory with an investment of \$600,000 has been inaugurated in Ghazni province.

According to officials, this factory has a daily production capacity of 150 tons of flour and has created employment opportunities for approximately 60 individuals.

“We have invested around \$600,000 in this factory. The machinery was imported from Turkey, and the factory building was constructed locally,” said

Shah Mohammad, the factory’s manager.

Some residents of Ghazni and workers have called on other entrepreneurs to invest within the country to create more job opportunities.

“Investing within the country leads Afghanistan towards self-sufficiency and progress, enabling the nation to rely on itself in every aspect,” said Sediquallah, a resident of Ghazni.

Surgul, one of the factory workers, said: “We are

very happy that this factory has become operational in Ghazni province. This initiative allows young people to work in their homeland instead of migrating to other countries. We also urge other investors to launch more projects in Ghazni.”

Local officials have promised to provide more facilities for industrialists Ghazni province of Afghanistan.

Abdul Rahman Ahmadi, the head of the Ghazni Chamber of Industries and

Mines, said: “We are in discussions with them and have very important meetings scheduled for next week with the Islamic Emirate and the chamber heads. They have shown serious commitment to supporting the industry in terms of taxes and other areas.”

According to official data, currently, including six flour production factories, 100 large and small production factories are active in Ghazni province of Afghanistan.

Digital space in Pakistan under threat: Bilawal

E.P. Report

SUKKUR: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has emphasized that the digital space in Pakistan is under threat, urging the youth to engage in "democratic and peaceful resistance" to secure digital rights, including high-speed internet.

According to a press release issued by the Media Cell Bilawal House, speaking at the convocation ceremony of Sukkur IBA University, Chairman PPP said, "It is a matter of pride for me that this institution was established by my mother, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, during her second tenure as Prime Minister. The seed planted by her has now grown into a tree, earning recognition not only nationally but also globally." He highlighted that students from across Pakistan and even international students from countries like Sri Lanka are receiving education at the university.

Discussing the role of students in addressing national challenges and enhancing Pakistan's global image, Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said, "Students must utilize their knowledge for Pakistan's development. Today, we face challenges such as poverty, economic inequality, and climate change." He added, "It is the government's duty to control various aspects of governance, but when it attempts to overstep and control individuals or institutions, it is up to the youth to resist these efforts and assert their rights."

He reminded the audience that every generation has fought for its rights. "Democracy wasn't handed to us as a gift; it was achieved through struggle. Generations of youth, using their education, voices, and skills, have defeated oppressors time and again. From the colonial era to today, the youth have been at the forefront."

Chairman PPP expressed concern about the current state of the digital space in Pakistan. He called upon the youth to engage in peaceful and democratic struggles for their digital rights. He criticized the outdated understanding of technology by decision-makers in Islamabad, stating, "How can bureaucrats in their 60s, who still use old Nokia phones, comprehend the rights of the digital generation? How would they understand WhatsApp, Netflix, or gaming? We must claim our

rights from them." He further noted the irony of how two young Pakistanis from Lahore were among the pioneers in creating the world's first computer virus, showcasing the capabilities of Pakistani youth.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari stressed the need for better internet access and data privacy protections for the younger generation. He announced plans to visit educational institutions across the country, including Sindh, to gather student feedback on proposed digital rights legislation. "Tag me on social media and share your suggestions," he urged the youth, committing to raising awareness on the issue.

Addressing climate change, he warned of severe consequences if its impact is not mitigated. "Pakistan risks devastating floods and infrastructure collapse if we fail to address climate change," he stated. He criticized both bureaucrats and senior politicians for their lack of understanding of such crucial issues, focusing only on budgets and public sector development programs.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari lamented the absence of proper planning to combat climate change in the federal budget. He pointed out that Pakistan is among the top 10 countries most vulnerable to climate change. He urged developed nations to take responsibility, stating, "The industrialization and capitalism of these countries have caused the climate crisis. While they amassed wealth, they ignored the damage inflicted on the rest of the world. Now, when others seek their fair share, they lecture us about climate change limitations. If these countries profited from industrialization, others also have a right to that wealth." He concluded, "We're not asking for personal compensation but for funds to repair the damage they have caused."

Chairman extended his best wishes to the graduating students, urging them to contribute to national progress through the power of education. He praised the Sindh government's achievements in health and education, highlighting how students from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Punjab, and even Sri Lanka come to Sindh for quality education at institutions like IBA Sukkur, just as patients from across Pakistan seek treatment at Sindh's hospitals. During the event, Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari distributed medals and certificates to students, accompanied by Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah.

12 killed in Turkiye explosives factory blast

ISTANBUL (Reuters): At least a dozen people were killed on Tuesday after a blast occurred at an explosives manufacturing plant in the Karesi district of Balikesir, Turkiye, Turkiye Today reported, with four others injured.

It said the explosion occurred at a factory in the province of Balikesir and cited the local governor as saying there was no suspicion of sabotage. "There is information that 12 of our citizens died in the explosion that occurred in the factory in Karesi district," Balikesir Governor Ismail Ustaoglu said.

"After the explosion occurred in the part of the factory where capsules are produced, the building collapsed. All our teams are here right now," he added. Emergency crews, including 112 emergency medical and fire teams, were dispatched to the site shortly after the incident.

Turkish Justice Minister Yilmaz Tunc said that an investigation has been launched into the explosion. On X, Tunc stated that the Balikesir Chief Public Prosecutor's Office has assigned one deputy chief prosecutor and four prosecutors to oversee the investigation. He said: "The investigation is being conducted comprehensively and meticulously."

Additionally, Turkish Vice President Cevdet Yilmaz expressed his condolences to those who lost their lives in an explosion at an explosives factory in Karesi district of Balikesir. "I wish God's mercy upon our citizens who lost their lives as a result of the explosion that occurred in a factory producing explosives in the Karesi district of Balikesir, patience to their families and loved ones, and a speedy recovery to our injured citizens," he wrote in a post on X.

Russian cargo ship sinks in Mediterrane

MOSCOW (Reuters): A Russian cargo ship called Ursa Major sank in the Mediterranean Sea overnight after an explosion ripped through its engine room and two of its crew are still missing, the Russian Foreign Ministry said on Tuesday.

The vessel, built in 2009, was controlled by Oboronlogistika, a company that is part of the Russian Defence Ministry's military construction operations, which had previously said it was en route to the Russian far eastern port of Vladivostok with two giant port cranes lashed to its deck. The Foreign Ministry's crisis centre said in a statement that 14 of the ship's 16 crew members had been rescued and brought to Spain, but that two were still missing. It did not say what had caused the engine room explosion.

Russia's embassy in Spain was cited by the state RIA news agency as saying it was looking into the circumstances of the sinking and was in touch with the authorities in Spain. Oboronlogistika and SK-Yug, a company LSEG lists as part of the group and the ship's direct owner and operator, declined to comment on the sinking. Both entities were placed under sanctions by the United States in 2022 for their ties to Russia's military as well as the Ursa Major itself.

Unverified video footage of the ship heavily listing to its starboard side with its bow much lower down in the water than usual was filmed on Dec. 23 by a passing ship and published on Russia's life.ru news outlet on Tuesday. Spain's Maritime Rescue Service said it had received a distress signal from the Ursa Major on Monday when it was located about 57 miles off the coast of Almeira.

It said it had contacted a ship nearby which had reported bad weather conditions, a lifeboat in the water, and said the Ursa Major was listing to the starboard side. Two vessels and a helicopter had been sent to the scene and the 14 surviving crew members taken to the Spanish port of Cartagena. It cited the crew as saying that the ship had been carrying empty containers as well as the two port cranes on deck. A Russian warship had later arrived on the scene, it said, and taken charge of rescue operations. Oboronlogistika, the ship's ultimate owner, said in a statement on Dec. 20 that the ship, which LSEG data showed was previously called Sparta III,



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador-designate of Japan to Pakistan, Mr. Akamatsu Shuichi, presenting his diplomatic credentials to President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

PTI's protests: PHC seeks federal and KP govts response

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) two-member bench comprising Justice Syed Arshad Ali and Justice Fazal Subhan and issued notices to the provincial and federal governments seeking their response against the continues protests of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in Islamabad, on Monday.

The petition has been filed by Jawad Ali, a resident of Charsadda through his lawyer Intikham Alam Chamkani advocate. The federal & provincial governments, Chief Secretary, Inspector General Police (IGP) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and other officials have been named as respondents. The petition argued that the daily protests and sit-ins by PTI in Islamabad have caused immense losses to the business community, including the petitioner, as he has property and business interests in the capital city.

The petition contends that the PTI protests have paralyzed life in Islamabad, causing huge financial losses to the public and the government. The petition further states that the government has failed to maintain law and order in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa especially in Kurram district.

The petition further stated that PTI led government is unable to control fire in a factory which has caused billions of rupee lost to the industry while on the hand provincial government is mobilizing public resources for holding protests in Islamabad.

The petitioner has requested the court to direct PTI to refrain from holding any further protests or sit-ins in Islamabad, and to ensure that the party's leaders and workers do not engage in any activities which effects economy. PHC's issued notices to both the federal and provincial governments for their response while adjourned further hearing till date to be fix.

AD&SJ acquits accused in attempt to murder: Additional District and Session Judge (AD&SJ) Peshawar Inam Ullah has acquitted an accused involved in the Hayatabad attempt murder case due to lack of evidence.

According to prosecution, Awal

Court seeks response from ECP

E.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has directed the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to submit its response regarding the conduct of Senate elections in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The hearing, presided over by KP High Court Chief Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice Waqar Ahmed, focused on a petition concerning the holding of Senate elections in the province. The petitioner's lawyer stated that during the last hearing, the Election Commission had requested additional time to set a date for the elections.

In response, the ECP's lawyer mentioned that the Commission had given some consideration to the matter and had held several meetings regarding the Senate elections. The ECP's lawyer further informed the court that a meeting on the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Senate elections was held on December 10, with consultations still ongoing. He also noted that a review of reserved seats for the Senate is pending in the Supreme Court. Chief Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim remarked that the Election Commission should be given two weeks to finalize the matter. However, the ECP's lawyer requested more time, suggesting that the Supreme Court might also issue a decision on the matter. The Chief Justice responded that the court could not grant unlimited time and ordered the ECP to submit its response by January 16. On March 28, the ECP had decided to delay the Senate elections in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa due to the failure of the Speaker of the Provincial Assembly to administer the oath to newly elected members.

Arif Alvi gets 40-day transit bail

E.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) on Tuesday granted transit bail to former President Arif Alvi and directed him to appear before the respective trial courts. The PHC bench comprising Justice Arshad Ali and Justice Fazal Subhan also granted transit bail to Arif Alvi's son Awab Alvi in several cases registered against them.

The PHC approved 40-day bail for the former president while his son was granted 30-day transit bail. During the hearing, the defence counsel told the court that many cases are registered against Arif Alvi and his son Awab Alvi in different police stations of the country, suspecting their arrest. The PHC was requested to restrain the police from arresting them in any of the cases. Speaking to newsmen outside the court, Arif Alvi urged for the reversal of actions taken 'against' the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and said, "It is still time to reverse what has been done to the PTI." He also criticized the current state of democracy and the constitution, claiming that they have been compromised to keep PTI at bay, "Democracy and the constitution have been destroyed to keep PTI away," he said. "I will advise not to detain the Imran Khan," he said and predicted that the situation would be resolved within a month and a half. "It's not a long story, within a month and a half, the PTI founder will be free." The former president also challenged the current government, saying that if given the opportunity to govern for just four hours, he would uncover all the truth.

Khan, a resident of Dabgari Garden, was charged with firing at and injuring Muhammad Ayub on May 7, 2022, while he was walking with his friend Dost Muhammad. The prosecution had alleged that the accused had committed the crime.

The accused was represented by

lawyers Masood ul Hassan and Jawad ul Hassan, who pleaded his case in court. After completing the trial and hearing the arguments of the prosecution and defense, the court found that the prosecution had failed to provide sufficient evidence to prove the accused's guilt.

Israeli army forces patients out of Gaza hospital

CAIRO (Reuters): Israeli troops forced the evacuation of the Indonesian Hospital in northern Gaza and many patients, some of them on foot, arrived at another hospital miles away in Gaza City, the territory's health ministry said on Tuesday.

The Indonesian Hospital is one of the Gaza Strip's few still partially functioning hospitals, on its northern edge, an area that has been under intense Israeli military pressure for nearly three months. Israel says its operation around the three northern Gaza communities surrounding the hospital — Beit Lahiya, Beit Hanoun and Jabalia — is targeting Hamas militants.

Palestinians accuse Israel of seeking to permanently depopulate northern Gaza to create a buffer zone, which Israel denies. Munir Al-Bursh, director of the health ministry in the Hamas-run Gaza Strip, said the Israeli army had ordered hospital officials to evacuate it on Monday, before storming it in the early hours of Tuesday and forcing those inside to leave.

He said two other medical facilities in northern Gaza, Al-Awda and Kamal Adwan Hospitals, were also subject to frequent assaults by Israeli troops operating in the area. "Occupation forces have taken the three hospitals out of medical service because of the repeated attacks that undermined them and destroyed parts of them," Bursh said in a statement. The Israeli military said it was looking into the report.

Officials at the three hospitals have so far refused

Israel asks diplomats to seek Houthis' listing as terrorists

JERUSALEM (Reuters): Israel has instructed its diplomatic missions in Europe to try to get the Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen designated as a terrorist organization. The Houthis have repeatedly fired drones and missiles toward Israel in what the group describes as acts of solidarity with Palestinians fighting Israeli forces in Gaza. The attacks have disrupted international shipping routes, forcing firms to re-route to longer and more expensive journeys that have in turn stoked fears over global inflation.

"The Houthis pose a threat not only to Israel but also to the region and the entire world. The first and most basic thing to do is to designate them as a terrorist organization," Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar said in a statement. The United States, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Israel currently designate the Houthis terrorists, according to Sa'ar. The Israeli military on Saturday failed to intercept a missile from Yemen that fell in the Tel Aviv-Jaffa area, injuring 14 people.

orders by Israel to evacuate their facilities or leave patients unattended since the new military offensive began on Oct. 5. Israel says it has been facilitating the delivery of medical supplies, fuel and the transfer of patients to other hospitals in the enclave during that period in collaboration with international agencies such as the World Health Organization. Husam Abu Safiya, director of the Kamal Adwan Hospital, said they resisted a new order by the army to evacuate hundreds of patients, their companions and staff, adding that the hospital has been under constant Israeli fire that damaged generators, oxygen pumps and parts of the building.

Israeli forces have operated in the vicinity of the hospital since Monday, medics said. Meanwhile, Israeli bombardment continued elsewhere in the enclave and

medics said at least nine Palestinians, including a member of the civil emergency service, were killed in four separate military strikes across the enclave on Tuesday. The war in Gaza was triggered by Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023 attack on southern Israel, in which 1,200 people were killed and 251 taken hostage to Gaza, according to Israeli tallies.

Israel's campaign against Hamas has since killed more than 45,200 Palestinians, according to health officials in the Hamas-run enclave. Most of the population of 2.3 million has been displaced and much of Gaza is in ruins. A fresh bid by mediators Egypt, Qatar and the United States to end the fighting and release Israeli and foreign hostages has gained momentum this month, though no breakthrough has yet been reported.

Trump blasts Biden

WASHINGTON (AFP): Donald Trump hit out Tuesday at Joe Biden for commuting the sentences of almost every American federal prisoner on death row, as the president-elect prepared to replace the Democrat in the White House.

President Biden, in his final month in office, announced on Monday he was converting the death sentences of 37 of the 40 inmates awaiting federal execution to life without the possibility of parole. They included nine people convicted of murdering fellow prisoners, four for murders committed during bank robberies and one who killed a prison guard.

"Joe Biden just commuted the Death Sentence on 37 of the worst killers in our country," Trump posted on Truth Social, his social media platform. "When you hear the acts of each, you won't believe that he did this," he added. "Makes no sense. Relatives and friends are further devastated. They can't believe this is happening!"

Biden had imposed a moratorium on the federal death penalty but was under pressure to act further before leaving the White House on January 20, amid signals from Republican Trump that he would resume the practice. Three men were excluded from the move: one of the 2013 Boston Marathon bombers, a gunman who murdered 11 Jewish worshippers in 2018 and a white supremacist who shot nine Black churchgoers dead in 2015.

Iran lifts ban on WhatsApp and Google Play

TEHRAN (Reuters): Iranian authorities have lifted a ban on Meta's instant messaging platform WhatsApp and Google Play, as a first step to scale back internet restrictions, Iranian state media reported on Tuesday.

The Islamic Republic has some of the strictest controls on Internet access in the world, but its blocks on US-based social media such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are routinely bypassed by tech-savvy Iranians using virtual private networks.

"A positive majority vote has been reached to lift limitations on access to some popular foreign platforms such as WhatsApp and Google Play", Iran's official IRNA news agency said on Tuesday, referring to a meeting on the matter headed by President Masoud Pezeshkian. "Today the first step in

removing internet limitations... has been taken," IRNA cited Iran's Minister of Information and Communications Technology Sattar Hashemi as saying. Social media platforms were widely used in anti-government protests in Iran. In September the United States called on Big Tech to help evade online censorship in countries that heavily censor the internet, including Iran.

The reformist Shargh daily reported that 136 members of Iran's 290-member parliament sent a letter to the top council responsible for safeguarding the internet, saying the move would be a "gift to [Iran's] enemies". The lawmakers called for allowing access to restricted online platforms only "if they are committed to the values of Islamic society and comply with the laws" of Iran.

Iranians have, over the years, grown accustomed to using virtual private networks, or VPNs, to bypass internet restrictions. Other popular social media platforms, including Facebook, X (formerly Twitter) and YouTube, remain blocked after they were banned in 2009.

Instagram and WhatsApp were added to the list of blocked applications after nationwide protests erupted in September 2022 after the death of Mahsa Amini in custody. Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian Kurd, was arrested for an alleged breach of the Islamic republic's dress code for women. Hundreds of people, including dozens of security personnel, were killed in the subsequent months-long nationwide protests. Thousands of demonstrators were arrested.

Romanian Naval Chief visits newly commission PNS Yamama

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Romanian Naval Forces, Vice Admiral Mihai Panait, visited the newly commissioned Pakistan Navy Ship YAMAMA at Constanta Port, Romania. The dignitary was given a detailed briefing on the ship's capabilities.

PNS YAMAMA is the last of four Offshore Patrol Vessels built for Pakistan Navy by DAMEN Shipyards, Galati, Romania. These versatile, high-tech, and state-of-the-art platforms are designed to operate in contested maritime environments and are equipped to project deterrence across all domains of warfare. After its commissioning on 17 December



2024, PNS YAMAMA conducted its maiden Passage Exercise with a Romanian Navy ship to commence its operational readiness at sea.

Earlier, Commander Karachi, Vice Admiral Muhammad Faisal Abbasi, called on Chief of the Romanian Naval Forces, Vice Admiral Mihai Panait, in Bucharest. During their

interaction, matters of mutual interest, Navy-to-Navy engagements, and cooperation in maritime security were discussed. Both Flag Officers expressed satisfaction with the growing ties between the two navies and pledged to continue strengthening the existing level of cooperation in operations and training.

Bangladesh says ousted PM will face charges

DHAKA: Ousted Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will face multiple charges of crimes against humanity, the country's interim government said on Tuesday after sending an extradition request to India.

Hasina travelled to New Delhi in August during the student-led demonstrations that ended her 15 years in power. The initially peaceful protests, which began

in early July, were met with a violent crackdown by security forces, which left hundreds dead and sparked a nationwide uprising against Hasina, forcing her to flee the country. In October, a Bangladeshi domestic criminal tribunal issued arrest warrants for Hasina and more than 40 other people linked to the protest killings.

Bangladesh's foreign

affairs adviser, Md. Touhid Hossain, said on Monday that his country had sent a diplomatic note to India's Foreign Ministry asking for Hasina's return in order to begin a "judicial process." "We expect (India) will respond as soon as possible," Azad Majumder, deputy press secretary of the head of Bangladesh's interim government Muhammad Yunus, told Arab News. — Arab News