

Funeral prayer offered

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Funeral prayer for Shaheed Major Muhammad Awaits (Resident of District Narowal) who fought gallantly against khwarj terrorists and embraced martyrdom in North Waziristan offered at Miran Shah. Senior military officers, civil Officials, soldiers, and large elders from the area attended the funeral, said an ISPR news release.



# Govt open to dialogue within lawful limits: Siddiqui

ISLAMABAD (APP): Spokesperson for the government's coalition dialogue committee, Senator Irfan Siddiqui, stated on Friday that any demands made by the opposition will be considered within the framework of the constitution and the law.

Talking to a private news channel, he said that although demands have not yet been received from the opposition, the government

maintains that any demands conflicting with the constitution cannot be accepted. He emphasized that a committee has been formed to engage with the opposition for dialogue in line with democratic practices. Senator Siddiqui said that the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI)-led Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has failed to address terrorism and maintain law and order in the province.

At a time when Kurram was facing such a tragic situation, the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was attacking the federation with mobs, he added. He assured that the federal government is taking steps to address security concerns in the province but stressed that it is primarily the duty of the provincial government to curb terrorism and ensure stability.

# Punjab CM launches new farmer-friendly programs

LAHORE (INP): Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif has set a record for launching new farmer-friendly programs for agricultural uplift in Punjab. According to a press release, "The biggest Kisan Card of its kind, Green Tractors Program, provision of super seeders, the largest agricultural graduates' internship program in the history of Pakistan have been launched for agricultural development in Punjab".

"For the first time in Punjab, there is ample availability of DAP and other fertilizers at fixed rates and 99 percent of the total wheat cultivation target has been achieved in Punjab. At least 5,000 tractors have arrived under the Green Tractors Program, out of which 2,500 tractors have been provided to the farmers", the statement said.

"Under the CM Punjab Green Tractors Program, a

subsidy amounting to Rs 1 million per tractor is being provided. Agriculture graduates are busy guiding farmers in the field across Punjab. Young agriculture graduates will also get a monthly scholarship of Rs 60,000", it added. The handout further stated that the model agriculture malls are nearing completion in Multan, Bahawalpur, Sargodha and Sahiwal and would also be established in each district, adding that a project to restore canola gardens will be launched with a cost of Rs 1.5 billion.

CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif said, "In the past, mere slogans were raised for the prosperity of farmers, only PML-N government works practically for the well-being of farmers. The trend of farming is increasing in Punjab. We have amply proved that the Punjab government is firmly standing with their

farmer brothers and will not leave them alone under any circumstance."

## KPBoIT expresses condolences on Azerbaijan Airlines tragedy

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Vice Chairman of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Investment and Trade Hassan Masood Kunwar, expressed his heartfelt condolences to the people of Azerbaijan, following the tragic crash of Azerbaijan Airlines flight J2-8243. In a statement, Mr. Kunwar extended sympathies on behalf of the BoIT, emphasizing the shared bond of brotherhood between Pakistan and Azerbaijan. "This tragedy has deeply saddened us all. Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims, their families, and the entire nation of Azerbaijan during this difficult time," he said. Mr. Kunwar reaffirmed the unwavering solidarity of Pakistan with Azerbaijan and prayed for the eternal peace of the departed souls and strength for their families to bear the irreparable loss.

# CM Murad pays homage to Benazir Bhutto Shaheed


KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah paid tribute to former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto on the 17th anniversary of her assassination, remembering her as a courageous champion of democracy and the marginalized.

Murad Shah lauded Bhutto as the Islamic world's first female Prime Minister, praising her unwavering stance against terrorism and dictatorship. He described her as a symbol of the federation and a tireless advocate for farmers, labourers, and the middle

class, stating that her political legacy focused on improving the lives of Pakistan's most vulnerable citizens. The CM highlighted Bhutto's two terms in office, emphasising the positive impact on the lives of the underprivileged. He drew parallels between her bravery and that of her father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, stressing her commitment to democracy even in the face of death.

Mr Shah condemned her assassination as a tragic attempt to undermine Pakistan's progress and extin-

guish the hopes of its impoverished population. However, he affirmed that her mission continues through Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, who, he said, carries on her fight for social justice. The Sindh government, Murad Shah declared remains dedicated to realising Bhutto's vision of a prosperous and equitable society. Solemn ceremonies across Sindh marked the anniversary, reflecting the enduring legacy of a leader who gave her life for democracy and social justice.

**Mobilink Bank**

**PUBLIC NOTICE** **AUCTION OF GOLD**

Branch: Mardan    Auction Date: 30-12-2024    Branch code: 0019    Time: 12:00 PM

Finance facilities were extended by Mobilink Bank against the security of deposit and pledge of gold to the customers mentioned below. The customer who has neglected and failed to repay the finance extended to them by Mobilink Bank along with the markup thereon.

Customer Name	CNIC #	Address	Gold Weight (GM)	Detail of Gold Ornaments
Noor Ali	16101-5521494-9	Nowshera Road, Mohala Iram Colony, Mardan	11.2	1 addad necklace, 1 jora kantay

Notice is hereby given to the customer in above mentioned that if payment of entire outstanding amount financed along with markup is not made by them to Mobilink Bank within 1 day of the publication of this notice, Mobilink Bank shall auction the gold ornaments and no further Public Notice shall be issued to call upon the customer to make the payments.

**DISPOSAL OF ASSETS OF ROAD TRANSPORT BOARD KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA**

- The Road Transport Board (RTB) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa invites sealed bids under rule6(2)(a) "Single Stage One Envelope Procedure" of KPPPRA Rules 2014, from **eligible bidders** for the disposal of its assets namely: (a) Collection of Adda fees of Peshawar Bus Terminal and Shops of Peshawar Bus Terminal i.e. (b) Canteen & Tuck Shop, (c) Mobile/Computer Accessories Shop, (d) Spare Parts Shop, (e) Cleanliness of Washrooms of Peshawar Bus Terminal (PBT) and (f) Ten Kanal Land of Road Transport Board (RTB), under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (KPPRA) Act 2012 read with Rule No. 50D of KPPPRA Rules 2014 (both amended from time to time).
- Bid Solicitation Documents containing detailed description, basic mandatory/eligibility criteria, minimum benchmark value, and terms & conditions, may be obtained from the Office of Secretary Road Transport Board/Director Transport Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ground Floor, Benevolent Fund Building, Peshawar Cantt. (Rs. 5000 per application through bank draft in the favor of Director Transport Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) through a written application between **09:00 AM - 05:00 PM** on working day (Monday to Friday) from the date of publication of this advertisement in the newspaper till the last date for submission of bids.
- The bidders are required to submit the following bid security in the shape of a verifiable bank guarantee in the name of undersigned, **"Secretary Road Transport Board Khyber Pakhtunkhwa"**.

SNo.	Name of Asset to be disposed off	Bid Security (PKR)
01	Collection of Adda Fees of Peshawar Bus Terminal	8,500,000/-
02	Ten Kanal Land of Road Transport Board	9,450,000/-
03	Canteen & Tuck-Shop in Peshawar Bus Terminal	400,000/-
04	Mobile / Computer Accessories Shop in Peshawar Bus Terminal	50,000/-
05	Spare Parts Shop in Peshawar Bus Terminal	40,000/-
06	Cleanliness of Washrooms of Peshawar Bus Terminal	180,000/-

- The bids complete in all respects shall reach the undersigned by 1530 Hrs on 16-01-2025. Bids will be opened at 1600 Hrs on the same day in the office of Director Transport in the presence of the Asset Disposal Committee and the bidders / representatives who may choose to attend.
- The advertisement and bidding documents are also available on procuring entity website and KPPPRA website.
- Competent Authority reserves the right to reject any or all the bids as per provisions contained in Rule 47 of KPPPRA Rules 2014.
- The successful Bidder/Contractor shall be bound to deposit prescribed Income Tax and any other tax imposed by the Federal or Provincial Government, time to time.

**Director Transport, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa**  
**Address: Room NO. 135, Ground Floor, Benevolent Fund Building, Peshawar Cantt.**  
**Phone# 091-9214185**

[www.khyberpakhtunkhwa.gov.pk](http://www.khyberpakhtunkhwa.gov.pk)    Our Faith Corruption Free Pakistan    INF(P)3547/2024

# نیلامی ادنیٰ معدنیات

زیر دہشتی مطلع ہری پور میں گل معدنیات خیر بخت کو، ہے منظور شدہ ادنیٰ معدنیات کے مستند و ذیل رجسٹرڈ حضرات غلامی کی کل غلامی ہرے اور جیسے ہے "کی بنیاد پر مومند

2025/01/20 کو دفتر ڈپٹی کمشنری پور میں ہوتے دن 02:00 بجے کے لیے اور اگر کسی وجہ سے ہوئی نہ ہوگی تو ایسا نکلے گا دن 2025/01/21 کو ہوگی۔ لکھی مدت

الٹ منٹ لکھی تا ریاض ایک سال کے ہوگی۔

نمبر شمار	ایہ ریاض	سرکاری قیمت	کال ڈیپازٹ
1	جاک 'A' کل رقبہ 232.95 ایکڑ نگاہوں کواری اکٹوبر تحصیل غلامی مطلع ہری پور	68,992,000 روپے	17,248,000 روپے
2	جاک "C" کل رقبہ 1248.10 ایکڑ نگاہوں کواری تحصیل غلامی مطلع ہری پور	180,100,000 روپے	20,025,000 روپے
3	صوبائی میرا بلاٹ کل رقبہ 1216.66 ایکڑ نگاہوں کی صوبائی میرا بلاٹ ہری پور	305,800 روپے	76,450 روپے

- خواہش مند حضرات مجوزہ غلامی غلامی کے کم از کم 3 دن قبل تک درخواست بمو - 10,000/- روپے فیس مع 2% KPRA گیس قابل وادعی اور کال ڈیپازٹ اور دیگر گوارات اشتہار کے مطابق کر لیں گے۔ درخواست مع کرانے کی آخری تاریخ 01-02-2025 - 16 بجے۔
- دو حضرات جو کہ معدنیات خیر بخت کو، دے، رجسٹرڈ ہونے غلامی میں حصہ لے سکتے ہیں۔ غیر رجسٹرڈ حضرات غلامی میں حصہ لے سکتے۔
- کال ڈیپازٹ بنیاد بنیاد اسسٹنٹ ڈائریکٹر معدنیات ہری پور جو کہ درخواست دہندہ نے اپنے اکاؤنٹ سے بنایا ہو جائیگا تو کارڈ کی نوک لکھی اور رقم گیس رجسٹریشن فرم تک (NTN) رجسٹرڈ پرنسپل ڈپٹی (اگر درخواست دہندہ پرنسپل فرم ہو) اور آڈیٹنگ کمیشنز آف ایسیٹن (اگر درخواست دہندہ کمیشن ہو) کو درخواست نام کے ساتھ مع کرانے کو گئے۔
- اگر درخواست دہندہ مختلف رجسٹریٹرز کا جائے دے، سب سے پہلے کر سکتے ہیں۔ بعد میں مختلف رجسٹریٹرز کے ادنیٰ معدنیات کی پیشگی یا کسی اندر دہندہ کو مقرر ہوا۔
- 5۔ ڈائریکٹر انسپکشن اقداری غلامی میسٹر کرنے کا حق محفوظ رکھتا ہے۔
- 6۔ کامیاب ہوئی دہندہ کو الاؤنسٹ لکھی جائے گی۔ سے پہلے Advance withholding Tax پر پیشگی گیس مع کرانے کا ہوا۔
- 7۔ کامیاب ہوئی دہندہ کو غلامی کے زمینوں کے اندر کوئی ہوئی کی رقم 25% مع کرانے کا ہوا۔ اگر کامیاب ہوئی دہندہ زمینوں کے اندر کوئی ہوئی کی 25% رقم مع کرانے کا تو کال ڈیپازٹ مع کرانے کا ہوا۔
- 8۔ کامیاب ہوئی دہندہ کوئی کی 2% KPRA گیس مع کرانے کا ہوا۔
- 9۔ اگر پہلے گیس مع کرانے کا ہوئی دہندہ کوئی کی 25% رقم غلامی کے زمینوں کے اندر مع کرانے کا آؤشن کمیشن (2nd) نمبر پر کامیاب ہوئی دہندہ کو آؤشن کرے گی۔ (شرطیاتی کی ہوئی پہلے نمبر پر کامیاب ہوئی دہندہ کوئی کی 10% سے کم نہ ہو) اور اگر دوسرے نمبر پر کامیاب ہوئی دہندہ کوئی کی 25% رقم مع کرانے کے زمینوں کے اندر مع کرانے کے میں ناکام ہوا تو اس کا کال ڈیپازٹ بنیاد بنیاد اسسٹنٹ ڈائریکٹر معدنیات ہری پور کا جائے دے، سب سے پہلے کر سکتے ہیں۔ بعد میں مختلف رجسٹریٹرز کے ادنیٰ معدنیات کی پیشگی یا کسی اندر دہندہ کو مقرر ہوا۔
- 10۔ اگر کامیاب ہوئی دہندہ کو آؤشن کمیشن (ITO) 236. A of 2000 کے مطابق یا دہش ہولنگ گیس ادا کرانے کا ہوا۔
- 11۔ کامیاب ہوئی دہندہ کو "دک آؤڈر جاری ہونے کے 15 دن کے اندر اپنے رجسٹرڈ رجسٹریٹرز کو Demarcation کروائی ہوگی۔ اور ڈائریکشن سرٹیفیکٹ قدر پین شہر کو لکھی ہوگی۔
- 12۔ کامیاب ہوئی دہندہ کو آؤٹ لٹ پر ادنیٰ معدنیات کی ترسیل کے لیے مجموعہ معدنیات کے تقدیر پین شہر چاہاں استعمال کرانے کا۔
- 13۔ کامیاب ہوئی دہندہ کو ادنیٰ معدنیات کی ترسیل پین شہر روپے کے حساب سے ایکسٹرنل کوٹیشن ہولڈنگ ایسی کے تحت سرٹیفیکٹ آؤڈر کو ادا کرانے کا ہوا۔
- 14۔ کامیاب ہوئی دہندہ کوئی کی 10% سے کم نہ ہو) اور اگر دوسرے نمبر پر کامیاب ہوئی دہندہ کوئی کی 25% رقم مع کرانے کے زمینوں کے اندر مع کرانے کے میں ناکام ہوا تو اس کا کال ڈیپازٹ بنیاد بنیاد اسسٹنٹ ڈائریکٹر معدنیات ہری پور کا جائے دے، سب سے پہلے کر سکتے ہیں۔ بعد میں مختلف رجسٹریٹرز کے ادنیٰ معدنیات کی پیشگی یا کسی اندر دہندہ کو مقرر ہوا۔
- 15۔ غلامی خیر بخت کو، دہندہ کو آؤشن کمیشن (یکٹ 2017 کے تحت ہوگی۔
- 16۔ غلامی کے لیے درخواست مع کرانے کا ہوا۔ زمینوں کے اندر کوئی ہوئی کی 25% رقم مع کرانے کے زمینوں کے اندر مع کرانے کے میں ناکام ہوا تو اس کا کال ڈیپازٹ بنیاد بنیاد اسسٹنٹ ڈائریکٹر معدنیات ہری پور کا جائے دے، سب سے پہلے کر سکتے ہیں۔ بعد میں مختلف رجسٹریٹرز کے ادنیٰ معدنیات کی پیشگی یا کسی اندر دہندہ کو مقرر ہوا۔
- 17۔ غیر رجسٹرڈ حضرات غلامی غلامی کے کم از کم 3 دن قبل تک درخواست بمو - 10,000/- روپے فیس مع 2% KPRA گیس قابل وادعی اور کال ڈیپازٹ اور دیگر گوارات اشتہار کے مطابق کر لیں گے۔ درخواست مع کرانے کی آخری تاریخ 01-02-2025 - 16 بجے۔

**المشتہر**  
**اسسٹنٹ ڈائریکٹر معدنیات**  
**ہری پور**  
**بحکم**  
**ڈائریکٹر جنرل مائنز اینڈ منرلز**

INF(P)3519/24

# LHC links new school registration to bus policy

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Friday made the registration of new schools conditional to implementing a school bus policy. The court also sought a comprehensive report from authorities concerned in this regard by December 30.

Justice Shahid Karim passed the orders while hearing a set of petitions filed by Haroon Farooq and others against ineffective measures to control smog. During the proceedings, the court held that new school registration should include a mandatory school bus services. "No new school would be allowed to register without adopting this policy," it added.


The court also sought an explanation from the secretary schools regarding non-compliance with a previous order mandating bus serv-

ices for 50% of students. The court criticized the secretary for failing to implement the measures for school bus arrangements, while labeling this a violation of its orders. At this stage, a member of the Judicial Water and Environment Commission reported that the managing director of WASA has been instructed to resume work on water meters. To which, WASA's lawyer informed the court about financial disputes with a Chinese company, delaying the project. Justice Shahid Karim urged immediate resolution, warning that smog conditions are likely to worsen in the coming months. Subsequently, the court adjourned the hearing until December 30 for further updates on the school bus policy and related issues.

# Benazir's sacrifices ended dictatorships: ministers

KARACHI (PPI) PPP's Provincial ministers Syed Nasir Hussain Shah and Jam Ikramullah Dharejo today paid a glowing tribute to former prime minister Shaheed Benazir Bhutto on her martyrdom anniversary, hailing her as a symbol of courage, democracy, and resilience whose contributions to Pakistan remain unparalleled. In a statement, Shah described the former prime minister as an unmatched leader whose sacrifices laid the foundation for Pakistan's democracy. He praised Benazir Bhutto, calling her a great personality whose commitment to the country was unwavering. "Benazir Bhutto played a pivotal role in bringing two dictatorships to an end and stood as the savior of the people during challenging times. Shah also emphasized Benazir Bhutto's dedication to her mission, likening her resolve to that of her father and brothers. "Like her family, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto never retreated from her mission, no matter the personal cost," he stated.

The minister acknowledged the role of former President Asif Ali Zardari in safeguarding Benazir Bhutto's vision, citing his slogan "Pakistan Khaphe" as crucial in preserving the integrity of Pakistan. In a statement, minister Dharejo highlighted Bhutto's distinction as the first woman Prime Minister of the Muslim world, calling her a leader whose political acumen earned international admiration. "Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Shaheed made unprecedented sacrifices for the restoration and promotion of democracy in Pakistan. Her contributions at the international level are equally remarkable," he said. The minister also praised Benazir's commitment to the welfare of PPP workers and the nation, describing her as a symbol of resilience and leadership. "Benazir's services to the country and its people are unparalleled, and her mission for democracy lives on through Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari," Dharejo added.



**LADY READING HOSPITAL**  
**MEDICAL TEACHING INSTITUTION,**  
**PESHAWAR, PAKISTAN**

The Lady Reading Hospital, Medical Teaching Institution, Peshawar invites applications in the following specialty at Assistant Professor, Associate Professor and Professor level

**1. Gynaecology & Obstetric | 2. Dermatology**

**REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE:**

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**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS:**

- > The service of the incumbent will be governed by the Rules and Regulations of the institution under Medical Teaching Institution Reform Act, 2015 and amendments therein.
- > Applications (only through email) with a covering letter, detailed Curriculum Vitae, scanned copies of all the relevant documents (degrees, experience certificates & research papers (with authorship) etc.) and the names, addresses and emails of (03) three referees should be sent to the Email address: [facultyrecruitment@lrh.edu.pk](mailto:facultyrecruitment@lrh.edu.pk) on or before **January 14th, 2025**. However, this job advertisement may be treated as running job "Advertisement" till filling of the vacancies. In the covering letter/email subject, please indicate clearly the precise specialty and post for which you are applying. Only shortlisted candidates will be called for interview. Incomplete applications will not be entertained. The institution shall have the right to increase or decrease the number of vacancies. The institution cannot enter into correspondence regarding the selection or shortlisting process. LRH-MTI is an equal-opportunity employer with gender equality and Non-Discrimination.

**DEAN/CEO**  
Human Resource Office, Deanery,  
Lady Reading Hospital Medical Teaching Institution, Peshawar- Pakistan  
e-mail: [facultyrecruitment@lrh.edu.pk](mailto:facultyrecruitment@lrh.edu.pk)  
Phone: +92 91 9211430, Web: [www.lrh.edu.pk](http://www.lrh.edu.pk)

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**Diploma Holders and Science Graduates**  
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Pakistani or AJK Nationals who fulfill the following criteria may apply  
1. Three-year Diploma of Associate Engineer in one of the following technologies, recognized by Board of Technical Education with first division (ie, minimum 60% marks) in SSC and DAE:  
**1. Chemical    2. Electrical    3. Electronics    4. Mechanical    5. Civil    6. Computer    7. HVAC    8. Metallurgy    9. Instrumentation & Control**  
Candidates having Diploma in any other field must have to attach Equivalence Certificate from respective Board of Technical Education stating that their DAE is equivalent to any one of the above advertised fields for employment.

**OR**  
**Two-year Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) degree/Associate Degree in Science (ADS)** with combination of Physics or Chemistry with Math as a compulsory subject from a University recognized by HEC with First division (ie. at least 60% mans) in SSC HSC (Pre-Engineering only) and B.Sc.  
2. Age limit is 25 Years on 14-01-2025 date of birth should be either on or after 14-01-2000).  
3. Candidates whose final year result is awaited and they expect is get Fist division may also apply but completion of their diploma/degree requirements must be completed by 01-09-2025 otherwise they will not be allowed to join.

**FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND FACILITIES DURING STUDIES**

- \*Stipend of Rs. 17,500/- per month.
- \*Free bachelor hostel accommodation to outstation trainees only, subject to availability.
- \*Free Indoor treatment and transport facility to trainees only.

**CAREER AFTER COMPLETION OF THE COURSE**

- \*Successful trainees may be appointed anywhere in Pakistanas Tech-1/SA-1, in SPS-4 (Rs 31,320-1930-89,220 with an advance increment and admissible allowances on **regular basis under CPF Scheme**. For details, please visit our website [www.kinpoee.edu.pk](http://www.kinpoee.edu.pk).

**IMPORTANT**

- \*Only the candidates who fulfill prescribed eligibility criteria may apply. Candidate of those who do not full the requirements and apply for any of above positions, may be cancelled at any stage during the process of selection of subsequently and no claim whatsoever will be acceptable during and after selection.
- \*This office does not accept any liability for late delivery or loss of any letter, you are advised to keep checking our website for update information.

**HOW TO APPLY**  
Candidates can apply Online at [www.kinpoee.edu.pk](http://www.kinpoee.edu.pk) (Follow the instructions given on website to the form online).  
Candidates can also apply **by post**. Form and Admit Card are available for download at KINPOE website. Candidates applying by post must confirm their application status by checking our website after the first week of February 2025.  
The application processing fee (non-refundable) for online submission of application is Rs. 800/-and for submission by Dost Rs. 1500/-.  
Application Processing fee (Rs. 800/- for online and Rs. 1500/- for those applying by post) must be deposited either in  
> **KINPOE Online Account No. 4138577545 (Title of Account: KINPOE, KNPC, Karachi National Bank of Pakistan (NBP), KANUPP Branch (Branch Code No. 0152), Karachi.**  
There will be no bank service charges for submission of fee through any branch of NBP.

**OR**  
> **KINPOE Online Account No. 0541650500927 [Title of Account: KINPOE ADMISSION FEE ACCOUNT Askari Bank, SITE Branch (Branch Code No. 005, Karachi.**  
\*Candidates **applying online** must upload their paid online bank receipt and passport-size photograph on their online application form. They must also send. Through urgent courier service, their complete printed application form and paid receipt by post at the given address no later than January 14, 2025 Online candidates must check our website we for their application status after the last week of January 2025.  
\*Candidates **applying by post** must send through urgent courier service, their filled Application Form and paid bank receipt which must reach us by January 14, 2025 of the given address.  
\***Late or incomplete application** will not be entertained. You must keep photocopy of your filled Application Form and paid Bank Receipt for your record. It may be required later on.  
\*Candidates presently serving in Government / Autonomous / Semi-Autonomous organizations must apply through proper channel.  
\*Time and location of the Written test will be displayed of our website. Please keep visiting KINPOE website for any change or additional information regarding this program.

Submission Deadline  
January 14, 2025, (Tuesday)

Admission Test Date  
February 23, 2025 (Sunday)

**Deputy Registrar**  
Karachi Institute of Power Engineering (KINPOE)  
Paradise Point, Hawks bay Road, Karachi  
Ph: 021-99232777 Ext. 2701 (Timing Mon-Fri 8:30 am to 3:30 pm)



# PDWP approves key uplift projects for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Provincial Development Working Party (PDWP), in its ninth meeting held under the chairmanship of Additional Chief Secretary, Planning and Development Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ikramullah Khan, approved a series of development projects aimed at improving infrastructure, education, health, and social welfare across the province.

One of the flagship initiatives approved is the Ehsaas Hunar Program, a Rs. 3 billion project designed to provide interest-free loans of up to Rs.

500,000 to skilled youth for starting their own businesses. This program is set to benefit over 35,000 skilled individuals across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, fostering employment and economic growth.

In addition, the PDWP approved a Rs. 2.9 billion project for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of a 26-kilometer road from Arandu to Kalkatak Lowari in Chitral district, which will enhance connectivity and ease transportation in the region.

Other significant approvals included the improvement of flood protection structures in Swat and adjacent rivers, reha-

bilitation of CRBC and Paharpur Canal System in Dera Ismail Khan, and feasibility studies for solar lift irrigation schemes across the province.

The forum also approved Establishment of a Government College of Commerce in Duggar, Buner; reconstruction of the Agriculture Research Institute (ARI) in Mingora, Swat; upgrading Hayasrai Primary Health Center to a Category-D Hospital in Lower Dir; and construction of a Thalassemia Department at District Headquarters Hospital, Batkhela.

It also approved construction and rehabilitation of roads in South

Waziristan, Tank, Batkhela, and Upper Chitral; purchase of land for cemeteries; and construction of model religious schools and computer labs in registered religious schools.

The PDWP also approved projects to enhance governance and research capacity, including the establishment of a Chief Minister's Policy Office, a Sector Reforms Unit in the Public Health Engineering Department, and a Monitoring and Evaluation System for development projects.

The meeting was attended by PDWP members and officers from various departments.

## 8th death anniversary of Dr. Abdul Khaliq Ziar held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The SALGAI Foundation organized a commemorative event to mark the 8th death anniversary of the legendary poet, thinker, and writer Dr. Abdul Khaliq Ziar. The event was held in Peshawar, and it brought together poets, singers, musicians, and a diverse audience to celebrate the life and legacy of Dr. Ziar.

The event was led by Yasir Shah, Chairman of the SALGAI Foundation, who began by introducing the participants, poets, singers, and speakers. Yasir Shah eloquently highlighted the significance of Dr. Abdul Khaliq Ziar's contributions to Pashto literature and poetry, emphasizing his role as a social thinker and the deep impact of his work on Pashtun culture and society. Dr. Ziar's poetry, which reflects the societal struggles, hopes, and aspirations of the people, was the central theme of the gathering.

Young voices from the Pashto literary community, including Nabeel Khan, Hilal Yousafzi, Yasir Ahmad, Amin Ullah Kundi, and others, took the stage to speak about Dr. Ziar's poetic contributions.

They discussed how his work resonates with the contemporary world and reflects the socio-political realities of the Pashtun people. The speakers highlighted the timeless relevance of his poetry and its continued inspi-



ration to young poets and thinkers.

The event culminated in a short Mushaira, where local poets recited their works, paying homage to Dr. Ziar's legacy. The evening continued with a long late-night music session, which added a soulful touch to the event.

During the music session, Dr. Ziar's poetry and ghazals were sung by renowned singers as a tribute to his literary genius.

The music session was a powerful blend of poetry and melody, starting with a performance by Rashid Ahmad Khan, followed by Faiz Jan Sakhi, an ex-musicologist from Kabul University, who brought a classical touch to the event. Rahat Afghan and Tufail Ahmad further enriched the atmosphere with their soulful renditions, while Rahman Gul Marwat concluded the musical tribute, leaving the audience in awe of the poetic

and musical collaboration.

The evening was a heartfelt tribute to Dr. Abdul Khaliq Ziar, whose work continues to inspire generations of poets, thinkers, and artists. The SALGAI Foundation's event was a resounding success, creating a platform for both reflection on Dr. Ziar's legacy and the celebration of Pashto culture through music and poetry.

Speakers: Nabeel Khan, Hilal Yousafzi, Yasir Ahmad, Amin Ullah Kundi, Music Performers: Rashid Ahmad Khan, Faiz Jan Sakhi, Rahat Afghan, Tufail Ahmad, Rahman Gul Marwat, Event Structure: Introduction, detailed talk on Dr. Ziar's contributions, speeches, Mushaira, and music sessions. This event was a testament to Dr. Abdul Khaliq Ziar's lasting influence on Pashto literature and his enduring legacy in shaping the cultural and literary landscape of the region.



PESHAWAR: Provincial Coordinator UNFPA Mahjabeen Qazi presenting a shield to Advisor to CM on Information Barrister Muhammad Saif.

## Fakhar calls Timur F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs, Syed Fakhar Jihan, held a video call discussion today with Timur Suleimanov, the Advisor to the President of the Republic of Tatarstan, Russia, on youth affairs.

On this occasion, Director General of Sports, Abdul Nasir Khan and Director of Youth Affairs, Dr. Noman Mujahid were also present with the provincial minister.

During the meeting, both the Tatar government representative and the provincial minister discussed increasing cooperation in areas such as youth exchange, public-level relations, youth affairs, education opportunities for youth, tourism prospects and business opportunities.

The provincial minister assured the Tatarstan youth advisor of full cooperation in this regard and expressed hope that this potential collaboration will further strengthen the bilateral relations between Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Republic of Tatarstan, Russia. It is merit to mentioned that, the Republic of Tatarstan is a semi autonomous republic of Russia.

## A New Year's compass: Insights from Surah Al-Asr

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

THE wheel of life turns ceaselessly, carrying us forward with every passing moment. This unending cycle, unchanging since the dawn of time, will persist until the Day of Judgment. Years slip by as markers of our journey, some laden with joy, others with sorrow. As one year departs into history and another unfolds before us, we find ourselves at a crossroads of reflection and hope. The past year, like those before it, has been a mosaic of gains and losses. Loved ones left this world, leaving behind cherished memories, while others arrived, bringing with them the promise of new beginnings. As some look forward with optimism, others may reminisce about the comforts of the past, thinking perhaps it held more blessings than they realized at the time.

Surah Al-Asr provides a profound Quranic perspective on the nature and significance of time, emphasizing its value and urging humanity to use it wisely. Allah begins the Surah by swearing by time, highlighting its critical importance. "Asr," symbolizing the declining day, serves as a poignant reminder of life's fleeting nature and the urgency to make the most of our limited existence. The second verse, "Indeed, man is in loss," captures the universal human condition, warning that without purpose, direction, and meaningful action, humanity is destined for failure—not only materially but also spiritually and existentially. This prompts reflection on whether our time is being squandered on trivial pursuits or invested in actions that bring lasting benefit. However, Surah Al-Asr offers hope, presenting a roadmap for salvation through four essential qualities: faith, righteous deeds, upholding truth, and patience. Together, these principles provide a comprehensive guide to living a purposeful and fulfilling life, ensuring protection from the despair of loss.

Faith is the cornerstone of a meaningful life. Belief in Allah provides clarity, direction, and a sense of accountability that shapes our actions and decisions. It is through faith that life gains meaning beyond the material, anchoring us in spiritual principles that transcend the temporary nature of this world. Faith inspires us to act with sincerity and intention, ensuring that our deeds are aligned with divine guidance.

Good deeds are a natural extension of faith. They manifest our beliefs in tangible actions that benefit both ourselves and those around us. These deeds encompass acts of kindness, generosity, justice, and worship, each contributing to the betterment of society and strengthening our relationship with Allah. In performing righteous deeds, we not only secure blessings for ourselves but also create a ripple effect that extends positivity and hope to others.

The call to uphold truth emphasizes the collective responsibility of individuals within a community. Truth is a fundamental value in Islam, guiding interpersonal relationships, governance, and societal structures. Promoting truth requires courage and integrity, especially in the face of opposition or adversity. It is through truth that trust is built, justice is upheld, and harmony is achieved.

As we stand at the threshold of a new year, Surah Al-Asr invites us to reflect deeply on our lives. The passing of time is a stark reminder of life's brevity and the urgency to make every moment count. Each new year is a gift, a fresh opportunity to realign our priorities, mend our shortcomings, and recommit to the principles that lead to true success.

The past year, like every year, has been a teacher. Its lessons, whether learned through joy or trial, offer valuable insights into our strengths and weaknesses. It is a time to ask ourselves whether our actions have reflected our faith, whether our deeds have brought benefit to others, and whether we have upheld truth and exercised patience. If there are areas where we have faltered, the new year is a chance to seek forgiveness, make amends, and strive for improvement.

The theme of time, so central to Surah Al-Asr, resonates powerfully as we move from one year to the next. Time is a witness to our journey, recording our successes and failures, our efforts and neglect. It challenges us to act with urgency and purpose, knowing that each moment is an irreplaceable gift. The fleeting nature of time should inspire gratitude for the opportunities we have and a commitment to use them wisely.

For individuals, families, and communities, the new year is an opportunity to embrace the teachings of Surah Al-Asr collectively. By fostering faith, encouraging good deeds, promoting truth, and cultivating patience, we can create a society that thrives both spiritually and materially. This holistic approach ensures that time is not wasted but invested in building a legacy that benefits this world and the hereafter.

In conclusion, the turning of the calendar from one year to the next is more than a change of date; it is a profound reminder of life's impermanence and the responsibilities it entails. Surah Al-Asr encapsulates this message with eloquent brevity, offering a timeless framework for reflection and action. It calls us to evaluate our lives, renew our commitment to righteousness, and use the time we are given with wisdom and purpose. As we step into the new year, let us strive to embody these principles, transforming fleeting moments into meaningful contributions and securing success in both this life and the eternal life to come.

## Peshawar Zalmi starts activities in Peshawar ahead of PSL 10

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: From January 1, Peshawar Zalmi will start talent hunt and trials in Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Former Pakistan captain Inzamam-ul-Haq, Muhammad Yousuf, Kamran Akmal, Umar Gul and Peshawar Zalmi Director of Cricket Muhammad Akram will take the trials.

Before Pakistan Super League Season 10, Peshawar Zalmi has started activities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Peshawar. Talent hunt and trials will start in Peshawar from January 1 organized by Peshawar Zalmi. Open trials will start on January 1 at Arbab Niaz Stadium.

After that, the trials will be held on January 2 and 3 and the shortlisted players' matches on January 4 and 5

at the Hayatabad Sports Complex.

Peshawar Zalmi has started registration for trials on all its digital platforms.

After the trials, the matches of the shortlisted players will also be held on January 4 and 5.

Peshawar Zalmi Chairman Javed Afridi said in his message that Peshawar Zalmi and Zalmi Foundation will continue to work for the promotion of

cricket at the grass root level like in the past.

Javed Afridi said that Peshawar Zalmi once again demands to organize PSL matches in Peshawar.

Along with open trials and talent hunt, Peshawar Zalmi is also making pitches throughout Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on which young players are showing their skills.

Peshawar Zalmi Director of Cricket Mohammad

Akram said that there is immense cricket talent in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and we have full confidence and hope that more new talent will emerge from this talent hunt.

Peshawar Zalmi's budding superstar and wicket-keeper Mohammad Haris has also asked all the youngsters in his video message to participate in the trials and take advantage of this opportunity.

## Remembering Benazir Bhutto: The leader who fought for democracy and peace

PESHAWAR (APP): Benazir Bhutto Shaheed, the first women Prime Minister of Muslim World and twice premier of Pakistan, was paid rich tributes by political leaders, civil society and academia for her great services for democracy and political empowerment of people on her 17th death anniversary on Friday.

"The sweet memories of charismatic leader Benazir Bhutto, who attained the distinction of being the first elected women Prime Minister of the Muslim world and twice premier of Pakistan, are still alive in the hearts and minds of the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, who remembered her as true champion of democracy, a role model and harbinger of peace," said Sardar Ali Khan, former senator while talking to APP.

Besides collective prayers, Quran Khwani and condolence references were also being held by PPP workers in KP where speakers paid glowing tributes to her political and democratic services besides sacrifices for the nation.

On December 27, 2007,

Benazir Bhutto was assassinated in a gun and bomb attack after addressing a mammoth election rally at historic Liaquat Bagh Rawalpindi that left the entire nation in an endless mourning and deep shock.

Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Shaheed, 54, was one of the very few international stature personalities, who embraced martyrdom while being surrounded by a sea of supporters outside Liaquat Bagh and immortalized forever.

A leader of great quality of head and hearts with a taste of political know-how, Benazir Bhutto had left a luxurious life and came to Pakistan after an exile on October 18, 2007, with an aim to rid the country of dictatorship and put it on path of democracy, peace and development.

"Despite severe threats to her life, the daughter of one of Pakistan's most charismatic politicians and former prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, had followed the rich tradition of her illustrious family and did not flee danger, but instead embraced martyrdom by not bowing

to pessimists and dictatorial forces," said Sardar Ali.

On October 18, 2007, when she arrived at Karachi from Dubai, hundreds of thousands of her supporters from across Pakistan thronged the port city to welcome her beloved leader.

"Even the deadly explosion at Karsaz Karachi's rally where about 140 people were killed and more than 450 wounded could not deter her from political struggle as the celebrated leader knew that only democracy was a remedy to the topsy-turvy setup of the country, elimination of terrorism, solutions of economic and peoples' problems at that time," he said.

"Death was meaningless for Benazir Bhutto Shaheed as she came to Pakistan for the socioeconomic emancipation of poor and underprivileged, revival of genuine democracy and peace in the country despite severe threats to her life and was immortalized while staying among people outside Liaquat Bagh," said Malik Azmat, former Minister of State while talking to

APP.

"BB Shaheed lived for people and died for them," he said, adding Benazir Bhutto always thought about the welfare of 240 million Pakistanis being an international leader and openly condemned terrorism that cost her life."

He said Benazir Bhutto was martyred when she tried to restore genuine democracy and peace in Pakistan besides bringing Muslim countries and the West closer. Azmat said the imperialists and inimical forces removed her from the political scene in a bid to destabilise Pakistan and keep people backward.

"Benazir Bhutto Shaheed loved Islam from the core of her heart and had a great regard for eastern values and culture. In spite of her education in top universities and colleges of the west and two-times elected former PM, she upheld the eastern traditions and did not deviate from the Islamic teachings," he said.

"Benazir Bhutto proved her claim to be the 'Daughter of the East' as she always covered her head with her traditional

white headscarf and never shook hand with any dignitary, which spoke of her great love for Islam." He said even the opponents and critics believe that the country had never produced the leaders that matched Bhuttos political acumen and democratic struggle.

Hamza Khan, PMLN Nowshera President said Benazir Bhutto's thinking was democratic and progressive as she wanted to strengthen democracy in Pakistan. He said BB kept the torch of democracy alive by shedding her blood at Liaquat Bagh.

Professor Dr AH Hilali, former Chairman, Political Science Department, University of Peshawar said that Benazir Bhutto's assassination was a great loss to the country as she was the identity of Pakistan.

He said her assassination had saddened entire progressive and democratic leaders in the world.

He said the forces loyal to democracy should now learned that wrangling between the political parties would only strengthen hands of anti democratic forces and that our parlia-

mentary history was replete with such happenings as evident of the murder of first prime minister Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan at Liaquat Bagh Rawalpindi in 1951.

Senator Sardar Ali said that 'Shaheed-e-Jamhooria' considered KP as her second home and loved Pashuns as she knew that they had greatly suffered during the war on terror.

"On December 1, 2007, when she came to Peshawar during her election campaign amid 'Geyo Bhutto and Long Live Benazir' full throated slogans from hundreds of thousands of PPP supporters, BB said, I seek your help and cooperation to turn this land of Pashtuns into a peaceful zone. "I appeal to you not to fall into the trap of those, who believe in violence and extremism. Reject those who want to form their government at gunpoint. I ask my Pashtun brothers to come forward for peace and support the People's Party."

He said Benazir Bhutto was very keen in renaming NWFP, provincial autonomy to smaller federating

units and setting up of trade activities with regional countries on the pattern of European Union, adding BB's wishes were later materialized by PPP led Govt.

Sardar Ali said Pakhtoons strongly believed that she was martyred under a well thought out conspiracy to keep land of Pukhtoons backward, illiterate and deprived of their rights.

"Had BB been alive today, the destiny of the Pakhtoon nation would have definitely been changed as she was earnestly working for fulfillment of the wishes and dreams of her illustrious father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who had special attachment with Pakhtoons."

He said Benazir's martyrdom had weakened dictatorship and restored genuine democracy in the country, adding BB had advocated for political, social and economic empowerment of KP people and always laid great emphasis on their education, poverty alleviation and establishment of industries-education institutes linkages to provide jobs to the unemployed

and fresh graduates.

He said people's confidence in the anti-polio vaccination program was restored in KP after Benazir Bhutto Shaheed administered anti-polio drops to her daughter Bakhtawar Bhutto Zardari in 1994, which dispelled all doubts against the vaccine.

A polio-free Pakistan was the dream of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto and all governments in Pakistan since the launch of polio eradication campaign were making determined efforts to rid the country of poliovirus.

He said though Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Shaheed was not among us today; however, her guiding principles, matchless thoughts and vision were a great source of inspiration for people, political workers and future generations to take the country to new heights of progress and development.

The experts said BB Shaheed laid down life for democracy, peace and urged the nation to get unite for peace and against terrorism to take the country out of existing challenges.





## In brief

### Mobile lab deploys in Buner F.P. Report

BUNER: Public Health Engineering Department, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has deployed mobile laboratory to collect data of drinking water in Buner for elimination of diseases caused by contaminated water. Water is life and clean water is essential for a healthy life. But did you know that every year millions of people fall ill due to consumption of contaminated water? These views were expressed by Assistant Commissioner Gadezai Salarzai during the public awareness program on the occasion of checking the drinking water from the mobile laboratory. During the campaign water sample of community tube-well used for domestic consumption. AC Nasir Ali said that clean water not only improves health but also makes life prosperous and to build a healthy and safe society. He further said that on the orders of the provincial government and the special instructions of Deputy Commissioner Buner, under his supervision, samples of drinking water were collected from various public places in tehsil Gadezai / Solarize by the officials of Public Health Engineering Department and on the spot water quality was checked through the existing mobile lab. He added the public also brought water samples from their homes and got them checked through the mobile lab.

### Official visits Toba Tek Singh F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: Additional Director Operations Faisalabad division Tariq Mehmood Gill visited Toba Tek Singh on the instructions of Director General (DG) Punjab Food Authority, on Friday. Additional Director (Operations) Tariq Mehmood Gill and Deputy Director (Operations) Toba Tek Singh Yasir Mushtaq inspected various Sweets & Bakers of Tehsil Gojra and confectionery units. A number of units were fined a total of 1 lakh 15 thousand rupees for poor sanitation arrangements and the presence of insects in the production area. Additional Director (Operations) Tariq Mehmood Gill said That providing quality food to the people is our first priority. He further said that the actions against the sellers of adulterated and substandard food items have been intensified to ensure supply of healthy food to the people.

### 12-year-old boy shot dead

SHIKARPUR (INP): A 12-year-old boy lost his life during a robbery inside the house in the Garhi Yasin tehsil of Shikarpur. The dacoits entered the house, and when the owner resisted, they opened fire. Unfortunately, 12-year-old boy named Mujahid Ali was struck by a bullet and succumbed to his injuries, according to police reports. The robbers fled the scene, and a search operation is currently underway to apprehend them. The police are investigating the incident and working to bring the culprits to justice. Earlier in a similar tragic events in Karachi, a man was killed while resisting a robbery attempt at his tyre shop near the government Islamia College. According to reports, the incident took place near Islamia College roundabout, where the victim, Hassan Arif, was working at his tyre shop when armed assailants entered intending to rob him.



QUETTA: Vendors sitting around fire to warm themselves along roadside during chill weather.

## Madaris bill returned to parliament on pressure

### F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Jamaat-i-Islami leader and former senator Mushtaq Ahmad Khan has said that due to foreign pressure, president Asif Ali Zardari returned the Madaris registration bill to the parliament. He was addressing the 'Khatam e Bukhari Sharif' function as chief guest at Jamia Hayat ul Muslimeen wal Muhsinat Koto here on Friday. The seminary head and former district nazim Ihsan ul Haq and other religious scholars also spoke on the occasion.

Former senator Mushtaq Ahmad said that about 4 million male and female students were enrolled in a total of 300,00 religious seminaries wherein the students got free education without any government's support. Talking about seminaries' registration bill, the JI leader said that it guaranteed seminaries' rights but the bill was not signed by the president because of foreign pressure. "The bill has become an act and no one can stop its implementation", he said, adding that it would ensure seminaries' registration, its audit, contemporary education and would also discourage militancy in seminaries.

The former lawmaker urged Pakistani rulers to represent the Hamas in the International Court of Justice. He said that Muslims were being massacred in Gaza, Palestine for the last 14 years but the Muslim world was doing nothing to prevent the war.

Regarding the jailed Aafia Siddique, he said that



the Biden administration had released anti-American spies and killers of the US citizens but it had kept criminal silence on the release of Dr Aafia.

He said that soon he would visit the USA to meet the jailed Pakistani lady. About the talks between the government and the PTI, the JI leader said the committee announced by the government was powerless. He asked the PTI leadership and workers to give up the politics of hatred and violence. Mr Mushtaq also condemned actions against the PTI workers. He said the PTI leadership should withdraw its call of civil disobedience. Regarding the lawlessness in ex Fata, he said that the Pakistan army had been deployed there but still acts of terrorism were beyond understanding.

### Robbers gang busted:

The Khadagzai police on Friday claimed to have busted a four-member robbers' gang and recovered the stolen items from its possession. Briefing local

journalists, the station house officer Naeem Khan said that police registered a house robbery case on the report of Tufail Ahmad. He said that police started efforts to trace the accused and finally the case was traced. The SHO said that four accused identified as Idrees of Aliabad Chakdara, Asif of Totakan Malakand, Shakil of Talal Colony Malakand and Bilal of Thana Malakand were arrested who confessed to the crime. Police also recovered a laptop, suits and other items from their possession. The SHO said the gang had robbed a shop at Khadagzai and had also taken away the CCTV cameras and its DVR.

Meanwhile the district police officer Salim Abbas Kulachi along with DSP Fakhr e Alam and DSP headquarter Syed Ahmad Khan visited the police station and appreciated the staff for its professionalism. The DPO asked the police officers to crack down on drug smugglers and other outlaws in their respective areas.

### PPP observes BB death anniversary Syed Waliullah Shah

NEWSHERA: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Nowshera chapter observed 17th death anniversary of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto with great reverence and enthusiasm. The participants paid tribute to sacrifices of Benazir Bhutto, on Friday.

The central ceremony was held at the residence of PPP senior vice president Saeed Ullah Khan, at Aman Garh. The ceremony was presided over by Malik Hidayat Khan, President of PPP Tehsil Nowshera.

A Quran Khawani was also held for the soul of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto. The ceremony was attended by prominent leaders of PPP District Nowshera, including Saeedullah Khan, Salim Khan Khokhar, Mamtaz Alam Din, Maulana Muhammad Usman Ali, Muhammad Ilyas, Malik Hidayat Khan, and others.

Speakers paid glowing tributes to Benazir Bhutto, saying that she was a symbol of democracy. They said that the continuity of democracy in Pakistan was due to the sacrifices of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto. They said that the role of Benazir Bhutto in making Pakistan an Islamic democratic country cannot be forgotten.

### All set for TDAP's Swat show Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: The Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) is organizing Swat Trade Show 2024, scheduled from December - 28- 29, 2024, at Nakreezy Event Complex, Mingora, Swat. The trade show will be inaugurated by Chief Executive of TDAP Zubair Motiwala and Secretary TDAP, Sheryar Taj along with Senior Director General Muhammad Naseer and Director General Peshawar, Noman Basheer will also attend the inaugural session, says a press release

Chief Executive TDAP, Zubair Motiwala welcomed the guests. He highlighted the importance of trade shows in promoting traditional goods to the world. The two-day trade show aims to promote trade, commerce & investment opportunities in Swat and the surrounding regions and is a shining example of TDAP's dedication to empowering local businesses and promoting economic growth in the region.

The event will bring together businesses, entrepreneurs and investors to showcase their products and services in an international mode on more than 80 stalls. It will offer business to business (B2B) meetings and networking opportunities.

Trade Development Conference on trade-related topics, cultural performances and traditional food stalls are the allied trade promotional activities on the very occasion of the two days trade show. The ceremony will likely to be closed by Engineer Amir Muqam, Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs for Gilgit Baltistan along with States and frontiers regions, and Zubair Motiwala Chief Executive TDAP. Mr. Sheryar Taj Secretary TDAP. The Swat Trade Show 2024 is open to the public and admission is free.

## Elders threaten to boycott upcoming anti-polio drive

### F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: Elders of Tajazai have threatened to boycott the upcoming anti-polio drive and come onto roads against the prolonged and excessive electricity load shedding. The warning came at a meeting held here in the Tajazai area and attended by local elders.

The participants showed deep concern over the unbearable power outages being carried in the area located at a stone throw distance from the District Headquarters Complex. They said that local residents had been subjected to the brunt of long electricity shutdowns despite paying power bills regularly.

Maulana Khalilullah who chaired the meeting said that excessive outages had made the lives of the rural population miserable to a great extent. He revealed that the elders had held a meeting with the PESCO executive engineer on power related issues three months ago wherein the official had assured them of providing the area with 12 hour electricity during day and night.

"The PESCO official failed to fulfill his commitment with the elders as the duration of load shedding increased from 12 to 16 hours and now the facility is being provided to consumers for only three or four hours", he claimed. Maulana Khalil and other elders said that the long power suspensions were unacceptable and the local and higher authorities of the company and district administration should take notice of it.

Residents of Lakki city have also flayed the PESCO authorities for keeping the urban localities out of the electricity. "All urban areas especially those linked with the old kuchery feeder are hard hit by prolonged spells of electricity breakdowns", said a resident. He said that the continuous daylong load shedding destroyed businesses and brought life to a standstill.

Another resident said that electricity to

various government installations including the City Hospital, District Jail, Tehsil Building, colleges and schools, election commission offices, commercial, industrial and residential areas had been energized from the old kuchery feeder. "The payment of utilities is cent percent on this feeder but despite that the inhabitants of the urban areas are facing long power suspensions", they claimed.

They demanded immediate steps to improve power supply to the urban localities and asked the government to speed up privatisation of PESCO, reduce dependence on manpower and introduce modern technology to curb power theft and ensure provision of uninterrupted supply to honest consumers.

Meanwhile, following the directives of District Education Officer Dr Abdul Malik, the Education Department and the Boy Scouts Association marked the birth anniversary of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah with national zeal and fervor in Lakki Marwat district.

In this connection, a function was held on the premises of Government High School No. 2, in Lakki city where Principal Muhammad Bashir Khan along with teachers and students cut the cake of the 148th birthday of the Father of the Nation. Students and other speakers shed light on the life of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and his efforts for the creation of Pakistan.

They highlighted the importance of the Quaid day in the history of Pakistan, saying that every Pakistani is indebted to the great Muslim leader and pays great tribute to him. Speakers urged students and youth to follow the thoughts of the Father of the Nation and adapt their lives according to the golden principles of unity, faith and discipline. They asked the students to focus on education and play an effective role in strengthening the foundations of the country and its sustainable development and prosperity.

## Shaheed BB death anniversary observed

### F.P. Report

BUNER: The 17th anniversary of martyred Ms. Benazir Bhutto was celebrated in Buner district with great devotion and respect. The anniversary ceremony was held in Swari in the house of elderly Jiala Bakhti Muhammad Kaka. Former candidate of Provincial Assembly Syed Shamsher Bacha, Jialas, Dr. Parkash, Syed Khazar and Bakhti Rawan with hundreds of Jialas participated.

Addressing at the anniversary ceremony, Dr. Parkash, Syed Shamsher Bacha, Said Khazar, Bakhti Rawan and others mentioned martyred Ms. Benazir Bhutto for her great sacrifices for the sake of country the nation especially the great cause of empowerment of marginalized class and segments. They paid tribute to Benazir Bhutto who sacrificed her life after the martyrdom of her father Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, brothers

Shahnawaz Bhutto and Mir Murtaza Bhutto.

The speakers expressed their commitment that they will organize every death anniversary and birth day celebrations to remember great leaders and to keep the Jialas of PPP in Buner together on one platform and remind them their martyrs and to refresh their memories. In the ceremony, through a collective prayer to Allah, they sought for the eternal peace of the soul of martyr Benazir Bhutto and for the high status of all the martyrs.

**UoB 5 days training concluded:** A five-day training program for management capacity building of the University of Buner has concluded on Friday. The training capacity building program for university management under the National Academy of Higher Education (NAHE) by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) Pakistan a strategic initiative to enhance the skills and performance of university administrators, said Vice Chancellor Dr. Saiful

Islam. The university highly commended the program and said that such programs generally aim to provide participants with advanced knowledge to improve governance, management practices and decision-making processes within higher education institutions to be equipped with tools and skills strengthen strategic management skills in leadership. Enhance understanding of innovative governance practices in higher education, promote innovative thinking for institutional growth and sustainability, he added. Training can be provided in financial management, policy implementation, and resource optimization, he optimized.

By this training, a collaborative network has to be developed among university management professionals, he admired. Dr. Saiful Islam, Vice-Chancellor of University of Buner thanked NAHE (HEC) and Director ORIC and hoped that this initiative would improve the management of University.

## Youth commits fratricide over oral dispute in Mardan

### F.P. Report

MARDAN: A youth committed fratricide on oral dispute residents of Al Khair colony, bypass road in the premises of city police station Mardan while First Information Report has been registered on complaint of their brother.

The City police Station registered a case and started investigation. Rescue 1122 Medical shifted the dead body to District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital. According to the incident, Abdul Qayyum son of Juma Khan Residents Mills Road Bypass Al Khair Colony filed a report and told the police that I was sleeping in my room That suddenly I heard the sound of firing whenever I reached the scene, there was a fight between our two sons Taimoor and Mansoor That meanwhile the accused Mansoor opened fire which hit Taimoor who was shifted to the hospital where he succumbed to injuries.

The reason for the being said to be fights and quarrels on a daily basis, City Police Station registered a case and started investigation. Station House Officer reached the spot along with the police team and started a search operation to arrest the accused.

**Internee obtained certificates:** The

Commissioner distributed certificates to 12 interns who completed their internship in Water and Sanitation services Company Mardan under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cities Improvement Project in a special ceremony.

Deputy Commissioner, WSSCM CEO Shahid Khan, Secretary to Commissioner, ADC Saeed-Ullah Jan and other relevant officials were also present on this occasion. The chief engineer of the company said in the briefing that 12 female students with BS and MS degrees in business administration, psychology and other subjects successfully completed the internship in various departments of the company under the KPCIP project.

**Police busts inter-provincial dacoit gang:** Police busted alleged five members inter-provincial robbery gang in the Sawal Dher area of Katlang tehsil and recovered Rs2.5 million cash, valuable gold, and three pistols from their possession, on Friday.

During the operation, the robbers resisted and engaged in an exchange of gunfire with the police, resulting in SHO Jabar Irfan Khan sustaining injuries. The alleged culprits identified as Ayaz, Nouman residents of Aman Garh, Nowshera, along with Zeeshan, Rashid and

Shahzad residents of Khanabad, Sawal Dher.

In a press conference held at Jabar Police Station, SP Rural Ehsan Shah and DSP Katlang Gulshid Khan disclosed that the suspects were involved in a robbery on November 17, 2024, at the residence of Bashir Ahmed. During the incident, the gang looted PKR 700,000 in cash and 20 tolas of gold. The arrests were made possible through the use of modern technological resources and scientific investigation methods.

**Traders argued to end load shedding:** Provincial General Secretary Central Trade Organization of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa Zahir Shah said that the profession of trade is a prophetic profession and the business community should consider this profession as worship, the business community is the backbone of the country's development, more facilities should be given so that they can play their full role in the development of the country.

He said that the central government should immediately put an end to unannounced electricity and gas load-shedding. He did this while addressing the succession ceremony at New Adda Khalil Mobile Plaza where he was the chief guest who took over oath from the newly elected cabinet.

## Thieves steal railway track in Landi Kotal

### F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Unknown gang of thieves has stolen more than thirty five meters long railway track at Landi Kotal-Torkham section of railway line, locals informed. The residents expressed their deep concern over the stealing of the valuable asset and said that unidentified robbers had stolen more than 36 meters long railway track in the last few nights.

A tribal elder Malik Masel Khan Shinwari while regretting the stealing of the precious asset said that the railway line was functioning for long period however after merging of the tribal districts into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, besides other mess, the railway track was left at the mercy of the God as no was supposed to claim responsibility of its safety. The government has discriminatory attitude towards the merged tribal areas and its assets therefore they are least concerned, if it damages or destroys, Malik argued.

He stressed upon the railway department to ensure security of the historical Khyber Pass railway line and revisit its plan of resuming in the best interest of the country. Hazrat Mir, an aged resident of Khuga Khel, Landi Kotal said that the railway department had hired services of locals as security guards of the railway track who had disappeared since suspension of the Safari train.

Previously no one even thought to damage or steal the railway equipment but



due to negligence of the department, excessive loss was inflicted to the track because of natural or man-made calamities, he remarked. It is irony of the time that the worthy legacy and a possible cheaper transportation source was destroyed and was probably sold at pennies, regretted.

They demanded of authorities concerned to take forthwith action to secure the valuable heritage. When the matter was brought into the notice of District Commercial Officer, Peshawar Division Abida Mayam she said that Khyber Pass railway track was non-functional one although guards had been deployed, responsible to secure the assigned railway line.

Although it was the responsibility of the engineering section of the railway department to secure infra- infrastructure of the

railway, and the issue would be taken up with the divisional engineering branch. All necessary measures would be adopted to ensure security of the railway assists, she vowed.

It is to be stated here that keeping in view strategic importance and countering Russian influence in Afghanistan, the British rule started construction work on the historical railway track in 1905 and was completed 58 kilometers long in 1925. Regular passenger service from Peshawar to Landi Kotal along the Khyber Pass railway line began on 04 November 1925 and was continued till 1982. In 2006 steam safari train for the tourists was launched but was shortly suspended when monsoon rain in the same year washed away sections of the line that were suspended for railway traffic.





GAZA: Palestinians gathered following an Israeli attack on the courtyard of Kamal Adwan Hospital and its surrounding buildings in Beit Lahiya.

## Haitian journalists says colleagues were cut down by bullets

PORT-AU-PRINCE (AP): A survivor of the worst gang attack on Haitian journalists in recent memory described seeing colleagues cut down by bullets and reporters with head and chest wounds going an hour or more without help.

Two reporters and one police officer died in attack at the reopening of Port-au-Prince's biggest public hospital. Seven journalists covering the event were wounded. "Some were hit in the chest," photographer Jean Fregens Regala recalled. "Some of the journalists had part of their face destroyed, some were shot in the mouth, or the head."

Members of the Viv Ansanm coalition of street gangs, which has taken control of much of Port-au-Prince, had surrounded the hospital and opened fire through a metal gate. The gangs later said they were angry the government had announced the reopening of the hospital without their permission. Video from inside at the time of the attack shows a metal gate outside the hospital buckling under a hail of gunfire, as reporters scrambled to try to get inside the building. "All the journalists started moving to go inside the hospital because we heard that the gunfire was getting close to us," recalled Regala. "I was hiding behind by the gate to put myself somewhere safe but other journalists were rushing to go inside the hospital

and there was non-stop shooting." Regala survived only because he remained sheltered behind a concrete guardhouse next to the gate. "If I had rushed and ran, or ran inside the hospital to hide, I am sure I would among the victims." "We began calling for help, for just aid, for the victims that were bleeding heavily," he said. "There was no doctor or nurse around." "While the hospital was about to reopen, it had no medical supplies available for giving first aid to the journalist victims and the other victims," Regala said, adding that since they couldn't find any gloves they used plastic bags on their hands as substitutes.

Nor did the health minister show up. The area is so dangerous that when police finally responded to the journalists' calls for help after about two hours, they had to come in with a ladder over a wall from the nearby National Police because the gangs controlled most of the streets. "These people spent more than an hour losing blood," Regala said. The Haitian Association of Journalists issued a statement calling on the country's barely functioning government not to put the lives of reporters - or the public - at risk with such events.

The association called for "authorities to act prudently in their rush to make decisions, to avoid exposing to danger the journalists and others who

accompany them at their events." Regala said it was clear as soon as they arrived that the area around the hospital was unsafe. "The fact that the minister of health invited us, you feel that preparations have been made already," he said. "When we made contact with a police unit, the police told us, they were not aware of the event, of the reopening of the hospital." The government had no immediate response to the complaints. Meanwhile, the seven wounded journalists were taken to another hospital.

"I send my sympathies to the people who were victims, the national police and the journalists," Haiti's interim president, Leslie Voltaire, said in an address to the nation. Street gangs have taken over an estimated 85% of Port-au-Prince and have also targeted the main international airport and Haiti's two largest prisons. Johnson "Izo" André, considered Haiti's most powerful gang leader and part of the Viv Ansanm group of gangs, posted a video on social media claiming responsibility for the attack. The video said the gang coalition had not authorized the hospital's reopening. Haiti has seen journalists targeted before. In 2023, two local journalists were killed in the space of a couple of weeks - radio reporter Dumesky Kersaint was fatally shot in mid-April that year, while journalist Ricot Jean was found dead later that month.

### Trump has pressed for voting changes

ATLANTA (AP): Republicans plan to move quickly in their effort to overhaul the nation's voting procedures, seeing an opportunity with control of the White House and both chambers of Congress to push through long-sought changes that include voter ID and proof-of-citizenship requirements.

They say the measures are needed to restore public confidence in elections, an erosion of trust that Democrats note has been fueled by false claims from President-elect Donald Trump and his allies of widespread fraud in the 2020 election. In the new year, Republicans will be under pressure to address Trump's desires to change how elections are run in the US, something he continues to promote despite his win in November.

The main legislation that Republicans expect to push will be versions of the American Confidence in Elections Act and the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility Act, said GOP Rep. Bryan Steil of Wisconsin, chair of the Committee on House Administration, which handles election-related legislation. The proposals are known as the ACE and SAVE acts, respectively. "As we look to the new year with unified Republican government, we have a real opportunity to move these pieces of legislation not only out of committee, but across the House floor and into law," Steil said in an interview. "We need to improve Americans' confidence in elections."

Republicans are likely to face opposition from Democrats and have little wiggle room with their narrow majorities in both the House and Senate. Steil said he expects there will be "some reforms and tweaks" to the original proposals and hopes Democrats will work with Republicans to refine and ultimately support them. Democrats want to make it easier, not harder, to vote New York Rep. Joe Morelle, the ranking Democrat on the committee, said there was an opportunity for bipartisan agreement on some issues but said the two previous GOP bills go too far.

"Our view and the Republicans' view is very different on this point," Morelle said. "They have spent most of the time in the last two years and beyond really restricting the rights of people to get to ballots - and that's at the state level and the federal level. And the SAVE Act and the ACE Act both do that - make it harder for people to vote."

## N Korean troops suffering heavy battlefield losses

KYIV, Ukraine (AP): North Korean troops are suffering heavy losses in the fighting in Russia's Kursk region and facing logistical difficulties as a result of Ukrainian attacks, Ukraine's military intelligence said.

The intelligence agency, known under its acronym GUR, said Ukrainian strikes near Novoivanovka inflicted heavy casualties on North Korean units. It said North Korean troops also faced supply issues and even shortages of drinking water. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said earlier this week that 3,000 North Korean troops have been killed and wounded in the fighting in the Kursk region. It marked the first significant estimate by Ukraine of North Korean casualties several weeks after Kyiv announced that North Korea had sent 10,000 to 12,000 troops to Russia to help it in the almost 3-year war.

The casualty disclosure came as the Biden administration was pressing to send as much military aid as possible to Ukraine before President-elect Donald Trump takes over in January. Ukrainian forces launched an incursion into the Kursk region in August, dealing a significant blow

to Russia's prestige and forcing it to deploy some of its troops from eastern Ukraine, where they were pressing a slow-moving offensive.

The Russian army has been able to reclaim some territory in the Kursk region from Ukrainian forces, but has failed to fully dislodge them. At the same time, Russia has sought to break Ukraine's resistance with waves of strikes with cruise missiles and drones against Ukraine's power grid and other infrastructure. The latest attack on Christmas morning involved 78 missiles and 106 drones, striking power facilities, Ukraine's air force said. It claimed to have intercepted 59 missiles and 54 drones and jammed 52 other drones.

Russia attacked Ukraine with 31 exploding drones. Twenty were shot down and another 11 didn't reach their target due to jamming, the Ukrainian air force said. As part of the daily barrage, Russian forces also struck a central market in Nikopol in the Dnipropetrovsk region with a drone, wounding eight people, according to local authorities. Russian President Vladimir Putin threatened that Russia could again hit Ukraine with the new

Oreshnik hypersonic ballistic missile that was first used in a Nov. 21 strike on the Ukrainian city of Dnipro. Speaking to reporters, Putin said Russia has just a few Oreshnik missiles, but added that it wouldn't hesitate to use them on Ukraine.

"We aren't in a rush to use them, because those are powerful weapons intended for certain tasks," he said. "But we wouldn't exclude their use today or tomorrow if necessary." Putin said Russia has launched serial production of the new weapon and reaffirmed a plan to deploy some of Oreshnik missiles to Russia's neighbor and ally Belarus. Belarus' authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko told reporters that his country could host 10 or more. Ukraine struck back with drone strikes of its own. Ukraine's Center for Strategic Communications said the military struck a plant in Kamensk-Shakhtynsky in Russia's southern Rostov region that produces propellant for ballistic missiles. "This strike is part of a comprehensive campaign to weaken the capabilities of the Russian armed forces to carry out terrorist attacks against Ukrainian civilians," it said in a statement.

## China probes personal disputes after mass killings

BANGKOK (AP): The order came from the top, China's leader Xi Jinping wants the recent spree of mass killings that shocked the country not to happen again. He ordered local governments to prevent future "extreme cases." The attacks, where drivers mow down people on foot or knife-wielding assailants stab multiple victims, are not new in China. But the latest surge drew attention.

Local officials were quick to vow to examine all sorts of personal disputes that could trigger aggression, from marital troubles to disagreements over inheritance. However, the increasing reach into people's private lives raises concerns at a time when the Chinese state has already tightened its grip over all social and political aspects in the East Asian nation. This is how people in China label these attacks.

In November alone, three took place: A man struck people at an elementary school in Hunan province, wounding 30, after suffering investment

losses. A student who failed his examination stabbed and killed eight at a vocational school in the city of Yixing. The most victims, 35 people, resulted from a man mowing down a crowd in the southern city of Zhuhai, supposedly upset over his divorce. While pinpointing the exact motive of such attacks can be difficult, there is an overwhelming feeling of being pressured within Chinese society, experts say. "On the surface, it seems like there are individual factors, but we see there's a common link," Wu Qiang, a former political science professor, said. "This link is, in my personal opinion, every person has a feeling of injustice. They feel deeply that this society is very unfair and they can't bear it anymore." Since 2015, Chinese police have targeted human rights lawyers and non-profit advocacy groups, jailing many, while keeping tight surveillance on others, effectively destroying the civil society that had been active from the early 2000s to 2010s. Wu was fired

from Tsinghua University after conducting fieldwork during the 2014 Occupy protests in Hong Kong. He says police officers have been regularly stationed outside his home in Beijing since last year.

Keeping a tight lid on the killings A decade ago, media outlets could report an incident as it developed and even share a suspect's name. Nowadays, it's rarely possible. During the 24 hours before the death toll was released in the Zhuhai slaying, state censors were quick to remove any videos of the incident and eyewitness accounts shared online. In the case of the Hunan elementary school attack, authorities shared the number of the wounded only after the court sentencing, nearly a month later.

A tally of violent attacks can be documented in other countries; notably, the US had 38 mass killings so far this year, according to an Associated Press database. But in China, a lack of public data makes it hard to decipher mass killing trends.

## China urges Philippines to return to 'peaceful development'

BEIJING (Reuters): China's foreign ministry urged the Philippines to return to "peaceful development", saying Manila's decision to deploy a US medium-range missile system in military exercises would only bring the risks of an arms race in the region.

The US Typhon system, which can be equipped with cruise missiles capable of striking Chinese targets, was brought in for joint exercises earlier this year. Philippine

Defence Minister Gilberto Teodoro said the Typhon's deployment for joint exercises was "legitimate, legal and beyond reproach". Army chief Roy Galido said that the Philippines was also planning to acquire its own mid-range missile system.

Rivalry between China and the Philippines has grown in recent years over their competing claims in the South China Sea. Longtime treaty allies Manila and Washington

have also deepened military ties, further ratcheting up tensions. "By cooperating with the United States in the introduction of Typhon, the Philippine side has surrendered its own security and national defence to others and introduced the risk of geopolitical confrontation and an arms race in the region, posing a substantial threat to regional peace and security," said Mao Ning, a spokesperson at China's foreign ministry. "We once

again advise the Philippine side that the only correct choice for safeguarding its security is to adhere to strategic autonomy, good neighbourliness and peaceful development," Mao told reporters at a regular press conference.

China will never sit idly by if its security interests were threatened, she added. The Philippine embassy in Beijing did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment.

## On 20th anniversary of world's worst tsunami, experts warn of complacency

JAKARTA: The pain is still fresh as Cut Sylvia recalls the last time she looked into her two-year-old daughter's eyes. It was a normal morning in the Indonesian coastal city of Banda Aceh in north Sumatra when Sylvia and her husband began to see people fleeing in front of their home, warning of oncoming sea water. Holding her infant daughter, Siti, in her arms, it was a matter of minutes before Sylvia was overwhelmed by the waves inundating their home. "I cannot describe that moment when I saw her eyes, and she saw my eyes, and we were staring at each other," Sylvia told Al Jazeera. "She was not even crying or saying anything. She was just staring at me. I knew that we would be separated," she said. Siti was swept away, taken by the tsunami. After 15 minutes of feeling as though she was "in a washing machine", Sylvia clambered on to the rooftop of a house where the enormity of what had just happened began to sink in.

"I felt so sad, very sad. I cannot express with words what I felt when I knew my daughter was lost." Sylvia's husband, Budi Permana, was also washed away, finding safety at the top of a coconut tree - the height the sea waters had risen to. He later collapsed from exhaustion while searching for his family and was found by members of the Red Cross, who initially thought he was dead. Sylvia and Budi were reunited a week later in the city of Medan, 600km (370 miles) from their destroyed home in Banda Aceh. No trace of Siti has ever been found. Lacking closure over the fate of their young daughter, the couple's grief remains fresh as they, and the world, mark the 20th anniversary of the Indian Ocean tsunami - the deadliest and most destructive in recorded human history. Just before 8am local time on December 26, 2004, a magnitude 9.2 to 9.3 earthquake struck off the west coast of the Indonesian

province of Aceh in northern Sumatra. An estimated 227,898 people were killed or declared missing across 14 countries in the tsunamis that followed.

Indonesia was the hardest hit, followed by Sri Lanka and Thailand, while the furthest fatality from the epicentre was reported in the South African city of Port Elizabeth. With 131,000 people killed, it remains by a considerable margin the deadliest natural disaster in the history of Indonesia - the world's second most disaster-prone country after the Philippines. While great advances have been made in tsunami research, sea defences, and the development of early warning systems in the two decades since the Indian Ocean disaster, experts warn that complacency is setting in as memories fade of the scale of the destruction in 2004. "The thing that's misunderstood is that a tsunami is not an ultrarare hazard. It's actually a relatively common hazard," said David McGovern, a senior lecturer and tsunami expert at the London South Bank University, pointing to a deadly tsunami that battered Japan just seven years later in 2011, the result of the fourth most powerful earthquake ever recorded. "There are around two tsunamis on average a year that cause death or damage," he told Al Jazeera. Concerns about complacency were high on the agenda as some of the world's leading tsunami engineering experts gathered on December 6 in London at a symposium to mark the 20th anniversary of the Indian Ocean tsunami, as well as to take stock of the current state of tsunami research. In a twist of fate, a day earlier, while the attendees were eating dinner at a restaurant in central London, news of a powerful magnitude 7 earthquake off the United States West Coast filtered through to the group. The earthquake triggered a tsunami alert, impacting some 500 miles (800km)

of the California and Oregon coastline.

Though the alert was later rescinded, McGovern said the timing "felt strange, to say the least". The alert only "reiterated the importance of the symposium and the message it was trying to deliver", he said. McGovern, a key researcher at MAKEWAVES - a multi-institutional and multinational project founded by tsunami researchers - said a "heck of a lot" has been learned over two decades of research since the Indian Ocean tsunami, including simply how the waves deliver damage. "That's something we didn't know. And the reason we didn't know was because tsunamis, in real life, are so destructive that when you do field surveys, the only information they really give you is the maximum values of the destruction," he said. "They're so destructive, they tend to just destroy everything." The group's latest project, announced in September, is the development of a prototype design for what would be a pioneering machine in tsunami wave generation technology - the Tsunami Twin Wave.

When the prototype schematic is completed in 2026, the United Kingdom government-funded design will model for the first time the impact of multiple incoming and outgoing tsunami waves, not only showing how tsunamis cause damage as they come in, but also how they cause damage as they return to sea. This seemingly simple innovation will fill a "huge knowledge gap" in the field, McGovern said. Due in part to the misperception of tsunamis being a rare phenomenon, researchers at MAKEWAVES are "always fighting the lack of funding" for tsunami research, McGovern said. This relative apathy comes despite the heightened risk posed by tsunamis in the coming decades, as sea level rises caused by climate change look set to only exacerbate the issue.

"My hope on the 20th anniversary is that we don't forget this risk, we don't assume it was a once in a millennium event, and we continue to prioritise one of the most deadly natural hazards humanity faces," he said. It is a question of when, not if, a devastating tsunami of the same scale as 2004 hits again, experts say. Predicting exactly when such an event will happen is impossible, but few have come closer than Phil Cummins. He has been described as the person who "essentially predicted" the 2004 tsunami. More than a year before the Indian Ocean tsunami struck - at an October 2003 meeting of the International Coordination Group for the Tsunami Warning System in the Pacific - Cummins, a seismologist, called for alert systems to be expanded to the Indian Ocean due to what he perceived to be the growing risk of a devastating wave. Referencing Dutch colonial-era records in Indonesia, he told the meeting in Wellington, New Zealand, that great 19th-century earthquakes caused by fault lines west of Sumatra had generated destructive ocean-spanning waves, and a recurrence of such an event was just a matter of time.

Just months before the tsunami, in August 2004, Cummins reiterated his concerns in a PowerPoint presentation to experts in Japan and Hawaii. He again warned that a giant earthquake could occur in central Sumatra at any time, posing a grave danger to several countries from tsunamis. Not even Cummins realised just how prophetic his warning would be. "I was shocked," said Cummins, an adjunct professor at the Australian National University. "I guess there were feelings of vindication, but also feelings of guilt, because I hadn't been standing on the rampsarts and screaming up and down. In retrospect, I should have done that, but I didn't know it would happen so quickly," he told Al Jazeera. While the tragedy that unfolded on December 26, 2004 proved

Cummins's prediction eerily accurate, he was wrong about one aspect - the earthquake's epicentre was in north Sumatra, not central.

In 2003, Cummins and his colleagues at Geoscience Australia had used a computer simulation to map a magnitude 8.8 to 9.2 underwater earthquake that hit off the coast of central Sumatra in 1833, causing a major tsunami. That simulation showed the earthquake's epicentre was near the cities of Bengkulu and Padang - about 500km (310 miles) south of the 2004 tsunami's epicentre. Cummins believed that this area was the "number one place" for a major earthquake and tsunami to recur. "That's where everyone thought the next tsunami would be, Padang," Cummins said.

"The really odd thing is that it still hasn't occurred. Everyone thought it was going to happen for sure, but here we are in 2024. It's mysterious," he said, adding that such an event occurring off the coast of Padang is "still a major concern". "Twenty years have gone by, I worry that people have gotten more complacent, perhaps myself included, and I don't know why it hasn't happened," he said. "From what we know, I'd say it's still the number one place." Despite major advances in earthquake alert systems and tsunami awareness and preparedness in coastal communities in countries such as Indonesia, Cummins warned that there is only so much that can be done to protect those living near the likely epicentre of future disasters. "We still haven't solved the problem of what to do about communities right next to the earthquake that might be hit by a tsunami. That can happen in as little as 10 or maybe 30 minutes, it's very little time to get a warning out and for people to react," he said, pointing to the example of Padang.

"Even though there is some awareness there, I don't think there is any

sense of urgency. I think people have become more complacent. It's a very crowded coastal strip, a low-lying coastal strip. There's a river that the population would have to get across. I think it'll be very difficult to evacuate," he said. Rina Suryani Oktari, a professor at Syiah Kuala University in Banda Aceh, has witnessed a similar complacency set in among coastal communities in northern Sumatra as time has passed. A coordinator for the Disaster Education and Management Research Cluster at the Tsunami and Disaster Mitigation Research Center, Oktari said cheap land prices have drawn many people back to high-risk coastal areas. "We are now better prepared, but there's still a possibility that there will be a big number of victims if there's another tsunami," she told Al Jazeera. "Many people have come back to live in the coastal area. The population is now even higher than before the [2004] tsunami." Cummins, for his part, cautioned that a new mega-tsunami could hit at any time, without warning.

"A lot of people are going to die no matter what," he said, adding, the "losses will be much greater" if communities are not well drilled. One couple who have not grown complacent are Budi and Sylvia, who still recount their loss of Siti as a cautionary tale for other Indonesians. Budi will never give up hope of finding his daughter, despite the two decades that have passed since she slipped from Sylvia's arms. He said that for many years, while working for the Red Cross, and now Islamic Relief, he would visit orphanages, asking if they had any girls who had been found during the 2004 tsunami. Budi draws inspiration from the case of one Indonesian girl who was reunited with her family in 2014, 10 years after she was swept away during the tsunami as a four-year-old. "I hope that also happens with my daughter," he said. "I hope." — Aljazeera



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# Will 2025 be a year of reform or chaos?

RARELY has the crystal ball used to divine the near future seemed so clouded by uncertainties. The year 2024 was dominated by disappointments, disturbing surprises, and continuing devastation in Ukraine and Gaza. It was also a year that underscored the inability of the UN to stop the most transparent genocide ever in Gaza, a senseless war in Ukraine, and mass slaughter in Sudan. There were a variety of multilateral efforts in 2024 to escape from US international dominance after the Cold War. This dominance had fueled a global politics of resentment and a search for an alternative world order that is law-governed and not subject to the geopolitical maneuvers of the five winners of World War II. These powers were granted unrestricted veto rights in the UN Security Council under the UN Charter, which has long paralyzed efforts to ensure compliance with international law. This produces a deep contradiction in the way the world is organized, allowing the most powerful and dangerous countries, all five being nuclear-armed states, to be legally free of any obligation to respect international law.

The question in many thoughtful minds is whether these developments in the prior year will continue in the year ahead. One near certain development is the rightward turn of internal politics in the West, given a dramatic twist by the prospects of radical change associated with the second coming of Donald Trump as US president. Trump has already appointed highly controversial political figures to his Cabinet, with the expectation of implementing an ultra-right domestic agenda. However, what is his approach to foreign policy? As well, the leading governments of Europe, including Germany, France, and Italy, all exhibit signs of leaning further toward authoritarianism.

There are some hopeful signs. Trump seems likely to push for a negotiated peace in Ukraine and bring to a close US President Joe Biden's "geopolitical war," involving fighting Moscow by supplying and funding Kyiv with ever more provocative weaponry while turning his back on diplomacy and urging NATO to join in the fight with Rusi to the last Ukrainian. Such a posture raised risks of a confrontation with Russia that could also result in catastrophic nuclear warfare. Trump wants to cut spending on distant and expensive foreign adventures with no genuine American security interest and stand before the world as a peacemaker. Ukraine was a war that never should have been, as a diplomatic compromise between Russia and Ukraine was from its inception in the interest of Ukraine and world peace, as well as being attainable by responsible statecraft.

In contrast to Ukraine, the context of Israel/Palestine is far bleaker. There is every indication that Trump intends to outdo Biden by being an even more unconditional ally of Israel, fully supportive of the Netanyahu-led project entailing the establishment of Greater Israel. This is a plan to erase the Palestinian challenge through the annexation of the West Bank, parts of Gaza, and to support Israel in extending its "buffer zones" in Syria and Lebanon. The plan also includes intensified efforts to destroy Iran's nuclear program and promote regime change in Tehran by force. The rightward turn of major governments in the West is likely to repress civil society opposition to the continuation of Israeli genocide and expansionism.

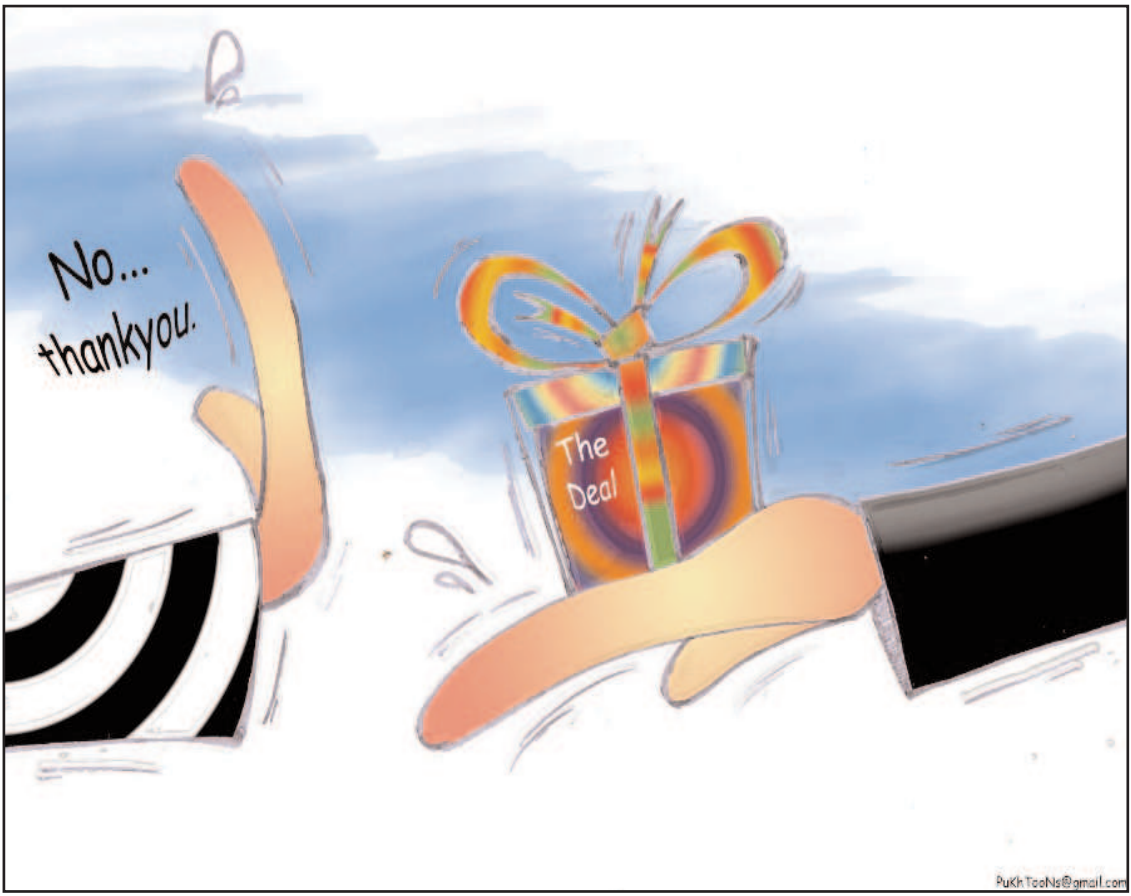
The efforts by countries in the Global South to have recourse to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and International Criminal Court (ICC) are a notable expression on the part of non-Western states to invoke international law to serve the causes of peace with justice. And the ICJ has responded in an encouraging professional manner, ruling in favor of provisional measures in response to South Africa's submission and issuing a separate opinion invalidating Israel's continuing occupation of Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem in an authoritative near-unanimous exposition of applicable international law. Of course, it is expected that Israel will defy these developments, as it has consistently done in the face of adverse rulings by international tribunals. Nevertheless, such rulings sympathetic with Palestinian grievances are symbolically important, delegitimizing Israel and mobilizing civil society activism that gives rise to global solidarity initiatives of a Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) variety.

The fate of the arrest warrants issued by the ICC, ordering the arrest and transfer to The Hague for prosecution of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant after a long delay is highly uncertain. Israel has mounted a legal challenge, and its government has made clear that the arrest warrants for the Israeli leaders are antisemitic outrages, and any implementation would be denounced and disrupted no matter what the ICC might decide. As with the ICJ genocide and occupation cases, the mere issuance of arrest warrants by the ICC was a significant symbolic Palestinian victory in the Legitimacy War, which may yet surprise the world in 2025 or shortly thereafter, by its overall impact on the viability of the Israeli state as now operative. It should be appreciated that the anti-colonial wars of the past 50 years were won by the weaker side militarily that managed to prevail on the symbolic battlefields of the Legitimacy War, which gives decisive weight to law, morality, and perseverance of a repressed people. The establishment of the civil society Gaza Tribunal in November of 2024 is a further legitimizing development in the Palestinian struggle for basic rights that seeks to activate global solidarity initiatives that shifted the balance in the global movement against South African apartheid, and before that of the global anti-war movement that nullified US military superiority in the Vietnam War.

At the same time, global society is experiencing a surge of multilateral initiatives. Strengthening the impulse to create autonomous multipolar networks of the sort modeled by the BRICS, and especially to mount challenges to dollarization of trade and finance, which, to the extent successful, will produce a backlash in the form of high tariffs and the economic menace of a trade war, aggravated by an increase in the tendency to replace workers with digitally sophisticated substitutes for human labor to promote profitability and efficiency. Above all, 2025 will witness growing tensions between the unified governance of global security by continued US hegemony and a resurgent challenge mounted by the Global South in the ongoing Legitimacy War with the West.

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# Children are political prisoners in Putin's Russia

Sasha Skolichenko

WHEN I was in a police van being driven from Detention Center Five to the Court, a woman told me, "The regime will fall someday because of the sick children," I don't have children of my own and I can't say that I have an especially deep love for them. However, there are children for whom my heart breaks. They were the ones who started the story that first threw me into the meaningless abyss of a Russian prison and then raised me to the sky on a plane alongside other prisoners of conscience.

In 2019, I worked as a counselor at a summer camp in Ukraine. Before everyone went home, the kids tied colorful threads around the wrists of those they wanted to remember for life. I was also honored with this gesture. One of those threads survived until February 2022. A police officer cut it off when I was detained after an anti-war rally in St. Petersburg. I respect children and believe that we should be as sincere, friendly and kind to them as possible. Lots of people say you should have children to take care of you when you're old. But I think we should think on a bigger scale: what matters more is how children can shape the future of our country. Perhaps a little girl being pushed in a stroller or some overly emotional teenager will be the ones to decide my fate when I am old. We can see what the elderly rulers of the former Soviet countries are capable of. The PTSD of their fathers - the Chekists, generals, soldiers - could easily result in child abuse. Now, these seventy-year-old children are speeding the world into the void, trying to prove to their old men that they "can repeat" and even surpass them. They're haunted by visions of Stepan Bandera, Nazis in Ukraine, the invasion of the Soviet Union... It's no surprise that the person who reported me for protesting against the war is an old lady born under Stalin.

How we show the world to children - ours or others, it doesn't matter - is how it will become. That is why it was important for me not to betray the trust those kids at the camp placed in me and not to break their faith in humanity. I truly hope that I succeeded, at least partly.

Now, about the children who, many female inmates believe, can be the end of Putin's state. On Russian television, which I diligently studied in prison, there are two channels aimed at women, including those working in domestic roles. Almost every commercial break between women's detective stories, melodramas, case dramas about fortune tellers and psychics features an advertisement from a well-known foundation.

*When a rescue worker is faced with a terrible choice to save either a man or a child, who will they choose? For such cases, they have clear guidelines. From time to time, I meet people who were involved in preparations for this summer's prisoner exchange.*

tion that raises money for children with mental and physical disabilities. Many of these children are terminally ill, and the foundation can only try and keep these little flames burning as long as possible. Each commercial is a story with a request for donations - for example, for urgent heart surgery for an infant or a mobile ventilator for a teenager so they can move around and enjoy life more.

All the women who saw these commercials had their hearts torn apart. Some dismissed it, convincing themselves that it was a scam: they could not imagine that the medical needs of these children were not covered by the state. But more often, women cursed and said things like, "It's a disgrace! So much money goes to the war, and good people have to raise pennies for these kids." The "traditional values" model cracks here. No wonder that recently Rev. Tkachov, who replaced Putin's main jester Vitaly Milonov, proposed to revert the concept of childhood to an even more "traditional" one when more children were born, but many would not outlive their parents...

The current ideology plays on love for children and parental fears, sometimes the most irrational ones. Let's ban gender-affirming therapy. Let's forbid "promoting" being gay, Pokémon Go and quadro-

bics. Let's outlaw the child-free lifestyle. Let's invade Ukraine to protect Russian children from Nazis and the West. Anything could serve as a pretext for retaliatory sanctions. Remember how the Kremlin caused a huge moral panic over the tragic death of Dima Yakovlov, a Russian child who died after being adopted by Americans, and named their retaliation for the Magnitsky Act after him? Nevertheless, this seeming-

ly strong cornerstone of Russian propaganda, this concept of a happy and innocent childhood, is actually wobbling like a milk tooth, shaken by hypocrisy.

Having spent two and a half years in prison, I know that a person can die there, even if they entered in perfect health. All our prisons are houses on fire with people slowly burning inside. And yes, there are kids there, as young as fourteen - this is the youngest the court can choose to detain. Usually, the charges have to be grave: rape, murder, gang violence, etc.. But there are child political prisoners too. I've seen them - Arsenalka prison, where I was held, is also a detention center for minors.

Child political prisoners are locked up with these violent delinquents. Often, the parents are afraid of what will happen if they speak out - and not without reason. Children are beaten in cells, humiliated by the administration, or even thrown into solitary punishment cells.

Just imagine how terrifying such isolation is for a teenager's mental health! In prison, I saw mothers who cried for days on end because they were worried about their children who could otherwise be free, living in comfort and abundance with their relatives. I can't fathom what a mother or father feels when they're

separated from their child and know they are in immediate danger.

When a rescue worker is faced with a terrible choice to save either a man or a child, who will they choose? For such cases, they have clear guidelines. From time to time, I meet people who were involved in preparations for this summer's prisoner exchange. The choice they had to make about who got to breathe free air and who would have to wait was an unbearable burden. What would I say if someone asked me whether I would want another political prisoner to take my place? Perhaps I would say yes, though I would be lying to myself. But if they told me that my place would be taken by a child, there would be no doubts - the child should be free. No one would have such doubts.

In my dreams, I imagine that Russia returns all the children, both Ukrainian and Russian, the Kremlin has stolen. A plane full of children would arrive and we gradually return what was taken away from them - their teenage years and childhood, time for joy, freedom, closeness with parents, first friendships, and first love. Such an exchange would be a blow to Putin's ideology, which pretends to prioritize the family and safety of children. Such a powerful event could not go unnoticed in Russia and would expose the hypocrisy of Putin's government. Knowing how the release of so many children would make Russians ask difficult questions, the Kremlin has to deny that underage political prisoners exist, nervously laughing, just like they are doing right now with the stolen children of Ukraine.

No one will gain any pragmatic benefit from this exchange. There will be even more bureaucratic difficulties with the children. They won't suddenly become prominent political leaders and overthrow the Putin regime. The state receiving them will certainly not see any "profits" for a long time. But such a choice - a choice to stand on the side of the most vulnerable, spending enormous resources to give them a chance at life is precisely what it means to show that human life is priceless.

The Moscow Times

# Trump's White House return puts new strains on NATO

Stephen Collinson

NEXT year will bring new strains to the transatlantic alliance, with the return of Donald Trump to the White House. The president-elect is certain to pile even more pressure on European nations to increase their spending on defense - and may use the threat of downgrading US support for NATO as leverage. And given the threat from Russia and rising global instability, he may well have a point.

Trump spoke again this week about his desire to quickly end the war in Ukraine and is already talking about ending Russian President Vladimir Putin's alienation from Western leaders by meeting him at an early opportunity.

European nations are, meanwhile, competing to win Trump's affections and preparing for the storm to come. French President Emmanuel Macron lured Trump to Paris for the

reopening of the Notre Dame Cathedral. Britain has just named Lord Peter Mandelson, one of its most Machiavellian political operators of the last 40 years, as its new ambassador to Washington. Germany is in political turmoil with a new election looming. And Trump prefers the company of leaders who share his populist nationalist creed, like Italy's Giorgia Meloni and Hungary's Viktor Orbán. It's been decades since the idea of the "West" has seemed so tenuous. The foundations for the post-World War II global order were laid by President Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill during World War II. And Christmas Eve always brings memories of Churchill's important trip to Washington shortly after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor that pushed the US into World War II in December 1941.

We first featured this meeting in Meanwhile on

Christmas Day in 2019. Here's another chance to read about this pivotal festive season that built a new world. Even Eleanor Roosevelt didn't know who was coming for Christmas - though in retrospect her husband's order for fine champagne, brandy and whiskey might have been a clue.

It was December 1941. World War II had drained the Christmas spirit and the US was in shock, just weeks after Japan's strike on Pearl Harbor dragged it into the war's inferno. Roosevelt was in no mood for house guests, but Winston Churchill bullied an invitation anyway. Soon, the British prime minister was aboard HMS Duke of York, dodging U-boats and plowing across the wintry Atlantic. A plane whisked his contingent from Virginia's coast to Washington, DC, and the British, used to London's air raid blackouts, marveled at the lights of the city below,

decked out for its first wartime Christmas.

The first lady learned the identity of her guest only when he was in the car on the way to the White House - with the veil of secrecy lifted with Churchill safe on US soil. What came next was the most remarkable summit in White House history. It came at a moment when humanity was in crisis, with tyranny and bigotry on the march. And it showed that leadership, from two giants equal to their moment in history, could make the world safe for freedom and democracy - no matter how dark the hour during the grim days of that long-ago Christmas.

Christmas, Churchill was not an easy guest given his idiosyncrasies - afternoon naps, late-night brainstorming, and a habit of parading around in various states of undress. He told FDR's butler he needed a tumbler of sherry with breakfast, Scotch and sodas for

# What will Palestine's future be in 2025?

Michael Lynk

IN 2024, there were a host of startling developments occurring in the Middle East and the wider world that impacted Palestine, most of them unforeseen 12 months ago: the continuation of the unrelenting Israeli genocide in Gaza, the battlefield defeat of Hezbollah and the devastation in Lebanon, the overthrow of Bashar Assad in Syria, the isolation of Iran, the election of Donald Trump, and a series of seminal rulings by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the International Criminal Court (ICC).

All of these seismic events make the assignment of imagining what Palestine's future will be in 2025 a precarious task. Yet, with caution thrown to the wind, we can make some educated guesses on six leading features. Donald Trump's return to the US presidency will certainly encourage Israel's accelerating subjugation of the Palestinians. His major appointments on the Middle East - including his secretary of state, his ambassador to Israel, and his two regional envoys - are all diplomatic gifts to Israel's far-right nationalist government. His political instincts are all about respecting the strong and disparaging the weak. The only restraint that Trump may impose on Israel would result from his quest for a substantive deal with Saudi Arabia, which is publicly demanding a credible path to Palestinian statehood.

A genuine Palestinian state is further away than ever. In 2025, more Palestinian land will be confiscated, more illegal Israeli settlements will be built, and settler violence, already at record levels, will only intensify. While Trump might restrict Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu from formally annexing parts of the West Bank, de facto Israeli annexation will continue unabated. The ability of the Palestinian Authority to shape events in its favor will likely shrink even further. As for the comatose peace process, the Palestinians long ago arrived at a traffic intersection, and the red light never changed. It remains red today, its only color.

The genocidal war on Gaza will finally end with a formal ceasefire, the release of Israeli hostages, and some Palestinian detainees. However, the unimaginable toll of deaths and suffering among the Palestinian civilians in Gaza will continue, as starvation, infectious diseases, a decimated economy, and a devastated landscape afflict the population. Hamas won't be completely defeated, but it has suffered a grievous blow in the short run. Israel will push hard to build settlements in the north and for clan warlords to run the rest of Gaza, which Trump might allow. Another great test will be the raising of the \$40-60 billion needed for the reconstruction of Gaza; this will create tension between Trump and his Gulf states allies, who will resist paying the lion's share of the consequences of a war they

opposed. Respecting Palestine, the United Nations will face some of its most perilous challenges in 2025. The one-year deadline set by the General Assembly for Israel to completely end its occupation of Palestine arrives next September, with Israel and the US committed to defying the obligation. In addition, Israel - with Trump's backing - is seeking to dismantle UNRWA, the UN agency that delivers education, health, and social services to Palestinian refugees in the Levant. The challenge for Europe and the Arab world will be whether they will defend the UN, its core commitment to successfully resolving the oldest item on its political agenda (Palestine), and the preservation of its largest agency.

Israel's diplomatic isolation will continue, even as its relationship with its superpower patron will deepen. Its outlier status at the United Nations - particularly at the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council - will see even more lopsided votes against its 57-year-old occupation, its denial of Palestinian self-determination, and its abuse of international law. The arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court against Benjamin Netanyahu and his former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant will make him politically radioactive, with heads of state and government that have signed the 1998 Rome Statute refusing to meet him. Pressure will grow within Europe to rethink various trade and cooperation agreements with Israel as a reaction to the war and its horrendous humanitarian consequences.

The role of international law in pronouncing on the question of Palestine will become even more momentous in 2025. After the signature rulings by the ICJ and the ICC in 2024, we are likely to see a growing movement to insist upon a rights-based approach to peacemaking in Palestine, replacing the discredited (but still very much alive) realpolitik approach of the Oslo process.

The momentum created by the recent genocide reports by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch will continue to echo through UN corridors and foreign ministries. But there are also headwinds: Republicans in the US Senate are determined to sanction the ICC for issuing the arrest warrant against Netanyahu, meaning that the viability of the court will require a stout defense by the 124 members of the Rome Statute, particularly from Europe.

As we learned from the past year, there will almost certainly be unexpected surprises in 2025. And while there will continue to be dark times for the Palestinians in the year ahead, the war in Gaza has also sparked a global movement of solidarity - particularly among the young - that will continue to inspire courageous thinking and bold acts. Its lasting impact should never be underestimated.

CNN



# It's time to come off the fence: I'm a conservative

**‘IT’S time you came off the fence, Nigel.” So counselled conservative philosopher Sir Roger Scruton, turning half-around as he walked away from my Oxford front-door one sunny afternoon in 2016. He’d come to look at Christ Church’s wine-list (and was leaving impressed). But we’d also talked politics. I’d told him that I preferred not to be boxable, maintaining room for manoeuvre. “Whether I’m conservative or liberal, Roger,” I said, “depends on (a) what I’m talking about and (b) whom I’m standing next to”. At the time, I subscribed to both The Guardian and The Times.**

Scroll forward six years to June 2022. Grown depressed by what Peter Hennessy once described to me as its relentless “litany of complaint”, I’ve cancelled the Guardian. I’m on the House of Lords’ riverside terrace, being lunched by my long-time mentor, Richard Harries, formerly bishop of Oxford, now Baron Harries of Pentregarth. Richard leans over the table and counsels me, “Don’t get labelled ‘conservative”, Nigel. Conservatives don’t believe in anything. They’re just pragmatists”. I mumbled a non-committal response. But I thought to myself, “I don’t doubt there are conservatives hungry for power without much idea what to do with it, and others who believe in little but low taxes and deregulation, but I’m not one of them”. Then my next vocation spoke: “It’s time to nail your colours to the mast and explain what a deeper conservatism looks like”.

So, in this season of enforced political Lent, when Tories are ruing their recent sins of commission and omission, and wondering what sort of repentance might hasten their party’s resurrection, I offer my own confession of what a conservative should be. But while others examine the entrails of polls and focus-groups to divine vote-winning policies, I step back to reflect on the deeper springs of a conservative point of view. Like Kemi Badenoch, I want to recover first principles.

I didn’t so much jump, as ease off the fence. I was also somewhat pushed. But the direction of travel had been set early on. I was a child in the sixties, but not of them. I never trusted the frivolous trashing of the past. While I laughed at Monty Python’s mockery of Battle of Britain pilots, made ridiculous with their plummy accents and handlebar-mustaches, my laughter was uneasy.

After all, under thirty years before, such men had risked their twenty-something lives to save the nation from Nazism, some of them burning alive in their cockpits. So, while my (late) elder brother was swallowing hashish-filled condoms for smuggling onto flights from Nairobi to Glasgow, I performed my first act of conservative rebellion: while churches were starting to show more seats than bums, and to the bemusement of my churchless parents, I converted to Christianity.

A main reason was my attraction to the Christian vision of human life as a moral adventure, made heavy with meaning because so much is at stake for good or ill. It endows our little lives with significance by investing them in things whose lasting value we receive as given: caring for others’ well-being, doing justice, maintaining integrity, knowing the truth, preserving what’s beautiful. Seen thus, human dignity is a by-product of serving objective “goods”. It’s given from above, so to speak, not invented from below.

That’s why I support the conservation of Britain’s traditional, mixed constitution. A good political constitution certainly needs a part where rulers are made sensitive to those they rule—an elected legislature whereby the people can hold their government to account and stop it in its tracks. It needs a democratic element. But it needs more than that. The people can be corrupt and popular majorities can be seriously unwise - after all, Hitler was elected by due democratic process. Moreover, popular election can’t guarantee a body of legislators all the expertise it needs. A few years ago, for example, the House of Commons didn’t contain a single medical doctor. So, a healthy political constitution needs a way of importing expertise into the legislature - by appointment to an unelected Upper House. It needs an aristocracy of wisdom.

It also needs a monarch who symbolises the accountability of the whole nation - king and people, rulers and ruled, government and opposition - to given values and principles of justice that are not the passing creatures either of royal fiat or of majority vote. That’s what the coronation ritual embodies, when the monarch gets onto his knees to receive the crown - the symbol of political authority - not from below, but from above. Not from the fickle people, but from the constant God.

Growing up in the shadow of the Second World War - I arrived only ten years after its end - imbued me with the conviction that violent force is sometimes necessary to fend off great evil. My mild-mannered father was transported from the gentle Galloway hills of Scotland to the war-torn Apennines of northern Italy, and I have climbed the modest mountain where, in October 1944, he found

himself trapped in no-man’s land as a stretcher-bearer. Though spared his fate, I’ve read enough to know of war’s horrors.

Nonetheless, I continue to think that the use of hard power is sometimes - lamentably, tragically - necessary. So, in 2013 I published a book about the ethics of violence, drawing on the sixteen-hundred-year-long Christian tradition of “just war” thinking. Provocatively titled, In Defence of War opposed itself to “the virus of wishful thinking”, borrowing a phrase from Michael Burn’s extraordinary 2003 autobiography, Turned toward the Sun.

But while Burn was referring to his naive 1930s hope that Hitler would turn out okay, the virus I had in mind was pacifism - the idea that war is always and everywhere morally wrong - and the “progressive” aspiration to abolish it through international law. If war

Nigel Biggar

sake of a few hundred quid. Yet, a full 45 per cent of Scots voters defied them, enchanted by a vision of a Better Scotland. So, no, Stupid, it really wasn’t all about the economy.

Unionist inarticulacy was partly an effect of the difficulty of describing the ground on which we’d long been standing, but it was also a symptom of a shrivelled notion of what matters to people. One of the referendum’s benefits was that it forced unionists like me to lift up our feet, look down, and contemplate what it is that supports us. I discovered that the UK is good for three things beyond the economic advantages of a single market: an historic depth of multinational solidarity of which the European Union can still only dream, greater external security for liberal democracy, and upholding of a humane international order.

The Scottish referendum cam-

***But after listening and reflecting, I concluded that Scottish independence was a dogmatic solution in search of a justifying problem. On the other hand, I was dismayed by the strangled inarticulacy of advocates for the Anglo-Scottish Union as they struggled to explain what the United Kingdom is good for and why its disintegration would be bad for everyone. The Conservative government seemed able to argue only in the thin terms of pounds and pence, trying to woo voters to stay with the UK for the sake of a few hundred quid. Yet, a full 45 per cent of Scots voters defied them, enchanted by a vision of a Better Scotland.***

invariably causes dreadful destruction, peace can permit it. Not going to war in 1994 was good for Britons, but not so good for the Tutsi in Rwanda: our staying at peace left the Hutu at peace to slaughter 800,000 of them. Peace, like war, is morally complicated.

Accordingly, I supported British military intervention for humanitarian purposes in Kosovo in 1999, Afghanistan in 2001, and Iraq in 2003. While each was flawed, none made me abandon the possibility of morally justified military intervention. What they did impress on me, however, was the importance of engaging the national interest. There’s nothing necessarily immoral about this, since nations have morally legitimate interests that it’s the primary duty of their governments to serve. So, while saving foreign peoples from grave political evils would be a good thing to do, it’s perfectly reasonable for citizens to ask why their uniformed sons, daughters, and siblings should be put in harm’s way over there, in some distant part of the world.

This point was neatly made in 1796 by Edmund Burke, who was advocating British military intervention in France to stop revolutionary atrocities. Challenged to explain why he didn’t also advocate intervention in equally deplorable Algiers, he replied, “Algiers is not powerful; Algiers is not our neighbour; Algiers is not infectious... When I find Algiers transferred to Calais, I will tell you what I think ...”. That is, while the British had a direct national interest in stopping revolutionary excesses in France, they had no such interest in stopping slave-raiding by Algiers. Since no one nation can save the whole world, the object of rescue must be selected. And national interest should help make that selection. What “progressive” idealists dismiss as hypocritical inconsistency is actually a properly cautious - conservative - exercise of political prudence. And prudence is a virtue.

The year after my book on war had been published, my attention moved from the moral legitimacy of national interest to that of the nation itself. In September 2014, the referendum on Scottish independence was held. As an Anglo-Scot, born of a Scots father and an English mother and educated on both sides of the border, I had a dog in the fight: I was a visceral unionist. Nonetheless, I felt obliged to consider the arguments in favour of Scotland’s independence, in case Scottish separatists might be right. As a Christian, I couldn’t confuse the United Kingdom with God.

Nations aren’t divine; they come and go. The UK didn’t exist before 1707, the United States almost fell apart in the 1860s, and Czechoslovakia did fall apart in 1993. Maybe the separatists were right, and the UK had come to the end of its shelf-life. So, I listened. But after listening and reflecting, I concluded that Scottish independence was a dogmatic solution in search of a justifying problem. On the other hand, I was dismayed by the strangled inarticulacy of advocates for the Anglo-Scottish Union as they struggled to explain what the United Kingdom is good for and why its disintegration would be bad for everyone. The Conservative government seemed able to argue only in the thin terms of pounds and pence, trying to woo voters to stay with the UK for the

campaign revealed something else, too: the political potency of colonial history. One argument in favour of independence I met reduces to this equation: Britain equals empire equals evil. Independence, therefore, would be an act of national self-purification, in which Scotland would cleanse itself of complicity in Britain’s imperial past, with its worldwide abuse of hard power, and sail off into a bright, new, shiny, pacifist, sin-free, European future. Having read about British imperial history for twenty years, I knew that the simplistic equation of empire with evil is historically untenable. Yes, the British Empire presided over a century-and-a-half of enslavement, but then it became one of the first states in the history of the world to abolish it, before devoting the second half of its life to suppressing it worldwide from Brazil to New Zealand. So, empire equalled both slavery and, more recently, anti-slavery, both oppression and emancipation.

What the Scottish separatist story made clear was the attractive power - greater than the lure of pounds and pence - of a morally uplifting national narrative, with which individuals can identify. So I began to think that someone needed to expose the separatists’ cartoonish denigration of the British imperial record and tell a truer and nobler story about it. That’s why, in July 2017, I collaborated with John Darwin, the eminent historian of global empire, to launch an Oxford research project called “Ethics and Empire”. While its aim wasn’t directly to defend the British imperial record, it did assume that empire could sometimes be a legitimate form of government. After May 2020, when the Black Lives Matter movement came over the Atlantic in the wake of George Floyd’s murder in Minneapolis, the political potency of colonial history became even clearer. Here, the BLM narrative is that Britain today is systemically racist; that our systemic racism stems from our colonial past, which can be summed up in the word “slavery”; and that, therefore, we must repudiate that past - “decolonise” - to exorcise our persistent racism. This narrative hasn’t only inspired the toppling of statues and erasing of names; it’s also misshaping our foreign policy - most recently by justifying David Lammy’s disastrous surrender of the strategically vital Chagos Islands to a Chinese ally.

That’s why, in February 2023 I published an alternative, even-handed history in the form of Colonialism: A Moral Reckoning. It was my nuanced view of the British colonial record that caused me to be dragged into the Culture Wars. In late November 2017 I published an article in the Times, arguing for what I thought was the incontestable view that we British can find in our colonial past cause for both shame and pride. Then in early December, I published an online description of the Oxford research project. That was enough to provoke Dr Priyamvada Gopal of Cambridge University to tweet her allies in Oxford, “OMG. This is serious sh\*t. We need to SHUT THIS DOWN”.

Shortly afterwards, in the space of a week, three mass denunciations were published online, the last signed by almost two hundred academics worldwide, demanding that Oxford University take the project out of my hands. Consequently, John Darwin abruptly jumped ship, Oxford his-

torians declared an official boycott, the project was temporarily stalled, friends and colleagues stepped nervously away from me, and sympathisers insisted on meeting where no one could see us. That’s what pushed me off the fence: the repressive aggression of the “progressive” left, supported by the timidity of the conflict-averse centre. And that’s what made me aware that free speech and academic freedom are under threat in our universities. Believing that all human views are fallible and need testing, in order to expose falsehoods and come nearer the truth, I took up the fight to conserve the cultural climate of free inquiry that I had hitherto taken entirely for-granted. I became chairman of the Free Speech Union and led a body of academics in shaping and promoting the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023, now set aside by the Labour government.

Yet while I believe in the importance of legal rights in shoring up liberties such as the freedom to speak one’s mind, I don’t buy into the absolutism of rights-advocates. Apart from a few legal rights that ought to obtain always and everywhere - say, against torture-whether and how a right should exist depends on the circumstances. Take, for example, the current controversy over Israel’s conduct in Gaza. Some international lawyers hold the Israeli government guilty of a war crime for depriving the civilian population of their absolute, inalienable right to water. But that’s nonsense. Suppose a situation where there’s no water or no one can supply it. Or a situation where a state has an overriding obligation to defend its own people against an aggressor, but can’t do so effectively while supplying water to the aggressor’s civilians.

In such circumstances, how can those tragically deprived of water be supposed to have a right to what cannot or may not be delivered? A basic human need only amounts to a right where supply exists and delivery is possible and obligatory. The right comes and goes according to circumstances. So, whether or not civilians in Gaza have a right to water depends on Israeli intentions, their efforts to minimise civilian risks, and the importance of their military objectives. Because I think that most rights are contingent upon circumstances, I’m deeply sceptical of lists or charters of abstract rights. Here, again, I find myself aligned with Burke in his denunciation of revolutionary France’s Declaration of the Rights of Man. The problem with abstract rights is that they hand an unelected judicial oligarchy the power to override an elected legislature on highly controversial public issues, compromising the democratic legitimacy of the law. Thus, in 2015 the Supreme Court of Canada found the Canadian parliament in violation of Canada’s Charter of Rights and Freedoms in failing to permit assisted suicide - despite the Canadian parliament’s repeated and recent refusals to grant a right.

That’s why I’ve come to the view that it would be best for the UK to withdraw from the European Convention of Human Rights and the jurisdiction of the Strasbourg court. While its defenders protest that the convention was largely a British creation, the truth is that the British government subscribed to avoid political embarrassment - and against the strong advice of the chief justice, who warned that subscription would hand a host of political hostages to judicial fortune. If the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand can manage without the supervision of an international court, I am confident Britain can, too. In sum I believe that human dignity derives from serving objectively valuable “goods”; in Britain’s traditional, mixed constitution, which recognises the importance of goods and duties that are given, not chosen; in the United Kingdom, because it continues to serve the good of its constituent peoples; in admiration for the humanitarian and liberal achievements of our imperial ancestors; in the unembarrassed pursuit of legitimate national interest; in the necessary use of hard power to fend off grave evils; in a liberal culture of free speech aiming to reach the truth more nearly; in well defined, legislated rights; and so in national independence of the European Court of Human Rights. This creed is “conservative” because it seeks to conserve Britain’s Christian tradition, its mixed constitution, the integrity of the United Kingdom, an even-handed appreciation of the worldwide achievements of our forebears, and the liberal culture of free thinking and speaking that took turbulent centuries to cultivate. Because, against “progressive” idealism, it affirms morally justified nations, national interests, national judicial independence, and military force. And because, with Burke and against abstract rights that authorise rule by a judicial oligarchy’s fiat, it asserts rights prudently defined in view of particular circumstances by democratic legislators. So, Sir Roger, I have come off the fence: I confess I’m a conservative. But, no, Bishop Richard, that doesn’t make me an unprincipled pragmatist, intent only upon gaining power, making money, and keeping them.

The Telegraph

## Voters will tell Musk where to put his \$100 million

**WHY would any sane political party want \$100 million dollars from Elon Musk? (In asking this question, I leave aside several secondary objections, such as that I doubt the money will be forthcoming; that, even if it were, its sudden arrival would cause immense waste and corruption; and that it would compromise Mr Musk’s new job as head of President Trump’s proposed Department of Government Efficiency.)**

The reason why no party should accept such money ought to be obvious: the voters would hate it. The initial excitement of Nigel Farage being a buddy of the richest man in the world may briefly enthrall his supporters and make his party look like a winner. But once that has calmed down, we shall be left - if the money shows up - with the fact that a British political party will in effect be owned by one foreign billionaire, and not any old foreign billionaire, but a foreign billionaire who has already funded the campaign of a foreign presidential candidate and remains closely linked with the coming government of a foreign power. This is exactly what voters hate. Our alienation from modern politics is closely related to the idea that our vote makes no difference because politics is really controlled by other forces. Foreign billionaires - though not nearly as powerful as home-grown bureaucracies in controlling our lives - come into that category.

Consider the decades-long fuss about the anti-Brexit, pro-Democratic Party influence of the Leftish billionaire George Soros. Mr Musk is so rich that he makes Mr Soros look like a shoelace street urchin, but the principle is the same. Is it just fine to have Mr Musk financing our politics simply because he has the “right” opinions? (And by the way, who imagines that whatever

Charles Moore

er opinions he currently has will last? Look how he moved over Ukraine. Look how he shifts on China.)

Just suppose that Mr Musk had waved his millions in front of any other British political party. It would have taken Mr Farage about 15 seconds to launch a savage denunciation of how the global elites were corrupting our proud democracy. But because the offer (if offer it is) is for Reform, there he goes, dancing attendance on Musk/Trump in Mar-a-Lago, like an eager waiter looking for a big tip. So, from the story so far, we have already learnt that Reform is a party that is longing to be bought. That puts it - glaringly, blatantly - in the category in which many voters place the Conservatives and - especially since the business of Taylor Swift concerts and Lord Alli’s tailoring services - the Labour Party.

Instinctively, all those on the Left who dislike Mr Musk, including the Electoral Commission, are starting to say that a new law should be passed to prevent such a donation. I do not see why; and it should be noted, in passing, that the Electoral Commissions should be a neutral body which ensures the integrity of elections, not one that lobbies for or against legislation. No blame should attach to Mr Musk if he does want to spend a tiny fraction of his vast pile of crypto-Muskbucks on Reform. It is simply that Reform (or any other British party that might take his passing fancy) should, say “No, thank you.” If they do not, voters will punish them.

The only role for the law here is one it already fulfils, which is to insist that all donations to a political party over a certain sum be openly registered under the name of the donor. Then the electorate has what it needs to know. I thought Kemi Badenoch was brave and right to say

in her BBC interview today that, if Mr Musk does hand over his largesse to Reform, that should be a spur to her party to “match” it. Any party that seeks to win the support of the electorate should not be state-funded and thus subject to state power. It should be capable of raising its own money by persuading supporters. Big, named donors should not be banned, but the party will be more honest and have a better long-term future if it gets hundreds of thousands of small donations rather than relying on a handful of large ones.

If Mrs Badenoch could say at the next general election that her party was financed by the freewill offerings of party members, whereas Reform was a UK franchise of X (formerly known as Twitter), she would be on to a winner. The Polish government, led by the former president of the European Council, Donald Tusk, has told Benjamin Netanyahu that he should not come to Poland. If he comes, it says, it will be compelled to arrest him because the International Criminal Court (ICC) has put out a warrant out for his arrest for war crimes and crimes against humanity. This is factually inaccurate. Several countries that recognise the ICC - France, for example - have nevertheless made it clear that they are under no such obligation.

And why was Mr Netanyahu hoping to go to Poland next month? Because, on January 27, it will be the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, the most murderous of Hitler’s concentration camps which - through no fault of the Poles - was built on Polish soil. The leader of the Jewish national home wishes to commemorate the suffering of the Jewish people but is banned. We in the West claim to weep for the Holocaust, but then acquiesce in this studied exercise in bogus legal and moral equivalence.

## Young people’s shrinking attention spans are nothing to worry about

**IN late-19th-century Britain, Londoners could expect to receive up to 12 postal deliveries a day. Letters were often exchanged with the frequency that we imagine only occurred with the advent of email. Today, archives brim with scrawled missives detailing arrangements to meet for dinner that are made first thing in the morning, only to be followed by an argument unfolding in the middle of the day, culminating in a reconciliation and reinstatement of the plan to meet. All before nightfall.**

We tend to think of the pre-digital era as much the same as now but without our myriad digital distractions, but it was not so. With ink blots and wild fountain-pen trails going up the margins, it is clear these historical writers were dashing off many such letters in a day. With the doormat filling up with mail every hour or so, even a gentleman or woman of leisure might have been forgiven for feeling rather distracted.

Distraction is claimed to be the underlying cognitive crisis of the digital age, and there is clearly a lot of very real, and justifiable, concern for younger generations. Indeed, I founded the Centre for Attention Studies to give space to this very exploration. Little surprise then, perhaps, that in a recent piece in the Atlantic, headlined “The elite college students who can’t read books”, Rose Horowitz reports that these days university “students have trouble staying focused on even a sonnet”. She reports that many middle and high schools in the US have turned away from literary texts in favour of short passages to enable the better teaching and testing of information skills that are directly relevant to the workplace.

But I wonder what we might learn if we set our current concerns in a broader historical context. Would it help those who lament our growing inability to sit attentively through a classical music concert to know that the 18th-century symphony was not designed with the expectation of an audience who listened with static, rapt attention? Or that the medieval monks did not need smartphones in order to believe their scribal work was threatened by the demon of distraction, Titiwillus?

Accusations of shrinking attention spans have been a

Marion Thain

fairly consistent part of the narrative of modernity. Even in the early 20th century, the writer and critic Ezra Pound was identifying the turn from poetry to prose as the result of a distracted readership, unable to attend to the linguistic density of verse: “The art of popular success lies simply in never putting more on any one page than the most ordinary reader can lick off in it in his normally rapid, half-attentive skim-over.”

Author Jonathan Bate spoke recently on the BBC Today programme about current education systems producing university students unable to attend to long-form novels. The casualties here, according to Bate, are the skills of concentration and critical thinking. Plus, he says, the focus of reading a long novel is good for our mental health. Bate laments the days in which he could ask a group of students to read three Charles Dickens novels in a week. Yet Bate’s trinity of Great Expectations (about 187,000 words), David Copperfield (about 358,000) and Bleak House (about 356,000) would take an average reader around 50 hours in total. Even a frenetic skim-read would leave little time for critical reflection and would almost certainly not be soothing for one’s mental health.

Horowitz complicates this picture by considering that we might not be seeing so much a decline in engaging with long texts as shifts in what is consumed and how: “A couple of professors told me that their students see reading books as akin to listening to vinyl records - something that a small sub-culture may still enjoy, but that’s mostly a relic of an earlier time.” Yet, simultaneously, we’ve seen the audience for audiobooks grow significantly. Her article suggests we might be witnessing not so much a loss of the skill to read a long novel as a shift in values: “Students can still read books [...] they’re just choosing not to.” Is it not possible that the 19th-century novel, much loved by many boomers and members of gen X, is becoming for some in the younger generations as much of a slog as the 18th-century novel was for many literature students of the 1990s? Might what we have identified as an attention crisis be in part a shift in priorities? None of this is to suggest

gest we should be complacent. Far from it: it’s essential that we understand what the gains and losses of our shifting focus are and who is gaining and losing the most from these new attention economies. If our literary education systems are putting more of an emphasis on information-processing skills, then this is at the expense of the development of human empathy, or an understanding of identities different from our own, through engagement with imaginative fictional worlds?

Even more fundamentally, it is time to consider what types of attention we aspire to and why. What psychologists sometimes call unifocal attention (what we would think of focused rather than diffused attention) is only one way to attend, and it’s not always the most useful - as Chris Chabris and Dan Simons showed in their 1999 experiment known as the “Invisible Gorilla Experiment”. Asked to count the number of passes in a basketball game, the experiment’s subjects failed to notice the person in the gorilla suit dancing through the middle of the match. Focus trained intently on one thing can blind us to important but unexpected events. A more diffused focus might exercise different cognitive muscles and bring different rewards.

Is it possible there are modes of attention that a younger generation is developing that might be difficult for those of us who are older to value, but which bring new types of benefit? What of the rapid, quick-fire, written exchanges of instant messaging? The art of the pithy, witty expression condensed into 140 or 280 characters? What of the dexterity and reflex-training physical and mental movement of the video game, or the socially dispersed forms of collective attention that are possible in online environments?

We can, and should, be able to ask these questions while being clear there are very real problems with our contemporary attention economies. Maybe history can show us how to be more flexible in the ways we present, engage with, and enjoy long-form culture. And in a context that was unimaginable just decades ago, perhaps we can also identify the potential for emergent practices of attention that could be harnessed for social and individual good.

The Guardian



# Spotify partners with JazzCash to localize premium subscription payments

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Spotify has partnered with JazzCash, one of Pakistan's leading digital financial services providers, to offer a seamless payment solution for Spotify Premium subscriptions. This collaboration will allow JazzCash users from now on to subscribe to Spotify Premium Individual plan without the need for a traditional bank account, making ad-free music, track downloads and exclusive Spotify Premium features like AI DJ or Jam more accessible to millions of people across the country.

Murtaza Ali, President of JazzCash, commented on the partnership, stating, "A large part of Pakistan's population remains underbanked, relying heavily on fintech platforms like JazzCash. Our mission is to provide people with greater access to technology. With JazzCash, millions of Spotify users can now enjoy a premium music experience by

simply paying for the subscription directly through their mobile wallets, making a global entertainment platform accessible to everyone." As part of the new partnership, Spotify and JazzCash offer exciting promotions for new users. The "Always-On" offer provides two months of Spotify Premium for the price of one. Additionally, a limited-time offer till December 31, 2024, will allow new subscribers to enjoy four months of Spotify Premium for the price of one. To subscribe to Spotify Premium, users can follow these easy steps via the JazzCash app:

1. Open the Spotify app, and choose the preferred Spotify Premium plan.
2. Choose JazzCash as the payment method.
3. Confirm the subscription to enjoy uninterrupted music streaming from over 100 million tracks.

The monthly Premium Individual subscription plan is

priced at PKR 349, with payments made directly through the Spotify app, providing an affordable and convenient way to upgrade to Premium. The JazzCash partnership underscores Spotify's commitment to enhancing its local offering in Pakistan, enabling more users to enjoy its extensive music library.

**About Spotify**

Spotify transformed music listening forever when we launched in 2008. Our mission is to unlock the potential of human creativity by giving a million creative artists the opportunity to live off their art and billions of fans the opportunity to enjoy and be inspired by these creators. Everything we do is driven by our love for music.

Discover, manage, and share over 100 million tracks, for free, or upgrade to Spotify Premium to access exclusive features including improved sound quality and an on-demand, offline, and ad-free music listening experience.

Today, we are the world's most popular audio streaming subscription service with a community of more than 640 million users, including 252 million Spotify Premium subscribers, across more than 180 markets. We are also the largest driver of revenue to the music business today. <https://newsroom.spotify.com/>.

**About JazzCash**

JazzCash is Pakistan's largest digital financial services provider, offering a comprehensive range of services, including mobile payments, banking, loans, and savings. With 45 million customers, JazzCash is dedicated to empowering individuals through accessible and innovative financial solutions. The company is committed to increasing financial inclusion and driving economic growth in Pakistan, especially among underserved and unbanked populations.



KARACHI: The President Bank of Punjab Zafar Masud along with Director General (NIPA) Karachi Dr. Syed Saif-ur-Rehman presents Certificates to participant of 36th Senior Management Course (SMC) during the graduation ceremony at National Institute of Public Administration (NIPA).

## PSX turns around to bullish trend, gains 927 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to bullish trend on Friday, gaining 927.86 points, a positive change of 0.84 percent, closing at 111,351.18 points as compared to 110,423.32 points on the last trading day.

A total of 815,920,043 shares were traded during

the day as compared to 628,026,201 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 32.917 billion against Rs. 33.582 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 443 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 223 of them recorded gains and 176 sustained

losses, whereas the share price of 44 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Fauji Foods Limited with 104,428,605 shares at Rs 17.08 per share, WorldCall Telecom with 74,132,809 shares at Rs 1.71 per share and Cnergico PK with 40,469,493 shares at Rs.6.52 per share.

## Dollar set for big annual gain as traders brace for high US rates

LONDON, SINGAPORE (Reuters): The U.S. dollar was headed for an almost 7% annual gain while Japan's yen was set for a fourth consecutive year of losses on Friday, as traders anticipated robust U.S. growth would make the Federal Reserve cautious on rate-cutting well into 2025.

The dollar index, which measures the currency against major rivals, rose 0.08% to 108.06 to approach a 2.2% monthly rise and was on course to close 2025 6.6% higher.

The dollar was also nearing a 5.5% gain this month against the yen and an 11.8% advance for 2024 against the weakened Japanese currency, while the euro stayed close to two-year lows.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell said earlier this month that U.S. central bank officials "are going to be cautious about further cuts" after an as-expected quarter-point rate reduction.

The U.S. economy also faces the impact of President-elect Donald Trump, who has proposed deregulation, tax cuts, tariff hikes and tighter immigration policies that economists view as both pro-

growth and inflationary. Traders, meanwhile, anticipate the Bank of Japan will keep its monetary policy settings loose and the European Central Bank will deliver further rate cuts.

The yen on Friday hovered around levels last seen in July, at 157.75 per dollar, while the euro traded at \$1.042, just above a low of about \$1.04 struck on Dec. 18.

Traders are pricing in 37 bps of U.S. rate cuts in 2025, with no reduction fully priced into money markets until June, by which time the ECB is expected to have lowered its deposit rate by a full percentage point to 2% as the euro zone economy slows.

The BoJ held back from a rate hike this month. Governor Kazuo Ueda said he preferred to wait for clarity on Trump's policies, underscoring rising angst among central banks worldwide of U.S. tariffs hitting global trade.

For now, the dominance of U.S. equities in world indices and weaker currencies in Asia and Europe helping to boost exporters have prevented tighter U.S. monetary policy from weighing on global stocks.

## BioNTech enters settlement with US agency

NEW YORK (Reuters): BioNTech (22UAY.DE), opens new tab has entered into two separate settlement agreements with the U.S. National Institutes of Health and the University of Pennsylvania over the payment of royalties related to its COVID-19 vaccine, the company said in filings.

The German company, which partners with U.S. drugmaker Pfizer (PFE.N), opens new tab for its COVID-19 vaccine, said on Friday it would pay \$791.5 million to the U.S. agency to resolve a default notice.

Separately, the company will pay \$467 million to the University of Pennsylvania (Penn), which has agreed to dismiss a lawsuit brought against the vaccine maker accusing it of underpaying royalties.

BioNTech said partner

Pfizer will reimburse it for up to \$170 million of the royalties payable to Penn and \$364.5 million of the royalties paid to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for 2020-2023 vaccine sales.

NIH and Penn did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The U.S. government is owed royalty payments under the terms of the license BioNTech has taken for certain patents owned by the NIH, among other entities.

Penn's lawsuit, opens new tab had said BioNTech owes the school a greater share of its worldwide vaccine sales for using "foundational" messenger RNA (mRNA) inventions developed by Penn professors and Nobel Prize winners Katalin Kariko and Drew Weissman.

## Another jackpot surpasses \$1 billion

NEW YORK (AP): Remember this moment because it probably won't last: A U.S. lottery jackpot is projected to soar above \$1 billion, and that's still a big deal.

Friday's Mega Millions drawing is worth an estimated \$1.15 billion, evoking headlines and likely luring more people to convenience stores with dreams of private spacewalks above the earth.

It doesn't seem to matter that the nation's top 10 jackpots — not including this one — already have boasted 10-figure payouts. For many of us, something stirs inside when a number ticks one dollar above \$999,999,999.

"The question lurking is, what happens when \$1 billion becomes routine and people don't care about it anymore?" said Jonathan D. Cohen, author of the 2022 book "For a Dollar and a Dream: State Lotteries in Modern America."

"There's no easy round number after a billion," Cohen said. "But also, how much money can one person possibly.

## SECP approves Stock split guidelines

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has given approval to the Pakistan Stock Exchange Limited (PSX) to issue Guidelines for Stock Split by Listed Companies.

The Guidelines are aimed at promoting stock splits as a viable financial strategy in Pakistan's capital market, especially for companies with high share prices, said a press release issued here on Friday. The Guidelines include detailed information regarding the legal and procedural aspects of stock splits, overall process flow.



### OFFICE OF THE TEHSIL MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION, BARA DISTRICT KHYBER

#### E-BIDDING/TENDER NOTICE

The sealed Tenders are invited from the contractors who are registered with Pakistan Engineering Council & Local Council Board Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for the year 2024-25 as per following schedule.

**OUT OF ADP NO.978/240311-DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES IN BAJAUR, MOHMAND AND KHYBER (2024-2025)**

S #	Scheme Name	Amount in Million	2% Earnest Money in Rs	Last Date / Time of Submission of Tender of Forms	Date / Time of Tender Opening	Time Limit
1	Construction of Street Drain, Culverts and Side Wall at Kala Khel Bara District Khyber	5.00	1,00,000	20/01/2025 12:00 PM	20/01/2025 02:00 PM	As per work order
2	Construction of Street Drain, Culverts and Side Wall at Sepah Bara District Khyber	10.00	2,00,000	--do--	--do--	--do--
3	Construction of Street Drain, Culverts and Side Wall at Aka Khel Bara District Khyber	10.00	2,00,000	--do--	--do--	--do--
4	Construction of Street Drain, Culverts and Side Wall at Shalobar Bara District Khyber	10.00	2,00,000	--do--	--do--	--do--
5	Construction of Street Drain, Culverts and Side Wall at Kamar Khel Bara District Khyber	5.00	1,00,000	--do--	--do--	--do--
6	Construction of Street Drain, Culverts and Side Wall at Malik Din Khel Bara District Khyber.	10.00	2,00,000	--do--	--do--	--do--

#### TERMS & CONDITIONS:-

1. Tender form along with BOQ and instructions to bidders etc. may be downloaded on Local Government Website [ebidding.icb.kp.gov.pk](http://ebidding.icb.kp.gov.pk) and KPPRA ([www.kppra.gov.pk](http://www.kppra.gov.pk)) after publishing in the newspapers.
2. As per Clause 37(A) of KPPRA 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 **Tehsil Municipal Officer TMA Bara, District Khyber** call deposit of scheduled banks shall be acceptable. Document like enlistment copy of Local Council board, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, photo copy of CNIC and NTN must be attached with tender form.
4. Sealed Bids sent in original to this office through registered courier service and duplicate copy of the bid be send to office of Secretary Local Council Board, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Through post office/registered courier service.
5. The tender shall be processed according to "Above/below system" based on the Market Rate System 2024 1st and as per KPPRA Notification No. S.R.O. (14)/Vol:1-24/2021-22 dated 10th May 2022.
6. The bidder shall submit their bid (hard Copy) with requisite Mandatory Documents i.e. E- Tender Form, BOQ duly signed, Active NTN/ Income Tax Certificate, PEC License duly renewed, KPRA Registration Showing Active Status on opening date of tender.
7. The contractor quoting their bids more than 10% below up to 20% below on Engineer Estimate shall submit along with their bids 8% Additional Security of Engineer Estimate cost in addition to 2% bid security. If the bid is not accompanied by the required amount of Additional Security, then it will be considered as non-responsive and 2% bid security shall be forfeited in favor of Government and the second lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly.
8. Similarly, a contractor quoting their bid more than 20% below shall submit with his bid an additional security on Engineer's Estimate cost equal to the differential amount of submitted bid of Engineer's Estimate along with the detailed rate analysis, in case of more than 20% below bids, if the bid is not accompanied by the detail rate analysis and/or required amount of additional security, then the said shall be considered as non-responsive. All the securities submitted along with such non-responsive bid shall be forfeited in favor of Government and the second lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly.
9. In case detailed rate analysis submitted with bids is, in the view of procuring entity not convincing, the Head of Procuring Entity may declare such bid as non-responsive without any forfeiture of bid securities and record reason 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. All contractors/ firms are bound to follow the KPPRA rules.
12. The work will be awarded subjected to the availability / allocation of fund.
13. No tenders are acceptable through Fax/by hand.
14. All relevant taxes will be deducted (as per Government Policy) from the contractors Bills.
15. If there is un-expected holiday announced by the Government on the opening date of the tender than the tender will be placed on notice board on next working day.
16. Any addition made in terms and conditions in the NIT advertised in the newspaper will be implemented as per KPPRA Rules.
17. If the evaluated electronic bid costs of two or more than two bidders are equal then the successful bidder will be declared through Open draw.
18. Open draw will be conducted after verification of CDR's from banks.
19. As per KPPRA advice the insurance bond will not be accepted.

INF (P) 3545/24

**TEHSIL OFFICER (I&S)**  
TMA Bara, District Khyber

**TEHSIL MUNICIPAL OFFICER**  
TMA Bara, District Khyber

### GOVERNMENT OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA TEHSIL MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION KARAK NOTICE INVITING E-BIDDING

Tehsil Municipal Administration Karak, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa invites electronics bids from eligible firms / bidders in accordance with KPPRA Procurement Rules 2014. The following schemes will be executed out of CSR Fund (2024-25).

S#	Name of Scheme	E/Cost (M)	Earnest money (Rs)	Last date & time for submission of tender documents	Date & Time of tender opening	Time Limit
1	Construction of PCC Streets in and around Lease Area of OGDC Package-I	10.00	200000	20/01/2025 [12:00pm]	20/01/2025 [02:00 pm]	As per work order
2	Solarization of Existing Pressure Pumps in and around Lease Area of OGDC	10.00	200000	--do--	--do--	--do--
3	Installation of Various Dia Pipe in and around Lease Area of MOL	10.00	200000	--do--	--do--	--do--
4	Solarization of Existing Pressure Pumps in and around Lease Area of MOL	10.00	200000	--do--	--do--	--do--
5	Installation of Solar Based Pressure Pump at Arif Ullah Korona Halala UC Teri	1.20	24000	--do--	--do--	--do--
6	Installation of Solar Based Pressure Pump at Muhammad Yaseen Khan Korona Akor Khel UC Teri	1.20	24000	--do--	--do--	--do--
7	Installation of Pressure Pump at Habib Korona Dhabb Hakim Khel	0.70	14000	--do--	--do--	--do--
8	Installation of Mini Tube well at Mashki Khel VC Jandri	2.00	40000	--do--	--do--	--do--
9	Installation of Solar Based Pressure Pump at Mohallah Admir Khan Korona Makh Banda	1.20	24000	--do--	--do--	--do--
10	Solarization of Existing Pressure Pump at Rasheed Badshah Koroona Dhabb Hakim Khel	1.20	24000	--do--	--do--	--do--
11	Solarization of Existing Pressure Pump at Khaliq Korona Dhabb Hakim Khel	0.80	16000	--do--	--do--	--do--
12	Construction of Ground Water Tank at Various Places in District Karak	1.00	20000	--do--	--do--	--do--
13	Construction of Janazgah at Peer Mila	4.00	80000	--do--	--do--	--do--
14	Construction of Boundary Wall with 01 No . Pressure Pump at GPS Sanda Khurram	2.00	40000	--do--	--do--	--do--
15	Solarization of Existing Pressure Pumps in and around lease area of OGDC	3.00	60000	--do--	--do--	--do--
16	Construction of PCC Street with Protection Wall at Sanda Manzai	2.00	40000	--do--	--do--	--do--
17	Supply of Various dia HDPE Pipe in and around lease area	1.50	30000	--do--	--do--	--do--
18	PCC with Various type of work in village sanda manzai	3.00	60000	--do--	--do--	--do--
19	Solarization of Existing Pressure Pump at Lakana	1.20	24000	--do--	--do--	--do--
20	Installation of Solar Based Pressure Pumps at VC Jandri	2.82	56400	--do--	--do--	--do--
21	Installation of Street Light at Karak	2.00	40000	--do--	--do--	--do--

#### TERMS & CONDITIONS

1. Tender form / BOQ can be downloaded after publication in the newspapers by the registered contractors from Local Council Board website ([ebidding.icb.kp.gov.pk](http://ebidding.icb.kp.gov.pk)).
2. All the enlisted contractors of Local Council Board shall offer their bids by filling rates online w.e.f the date of publication.
3. All the enlisted contractors have an option to withdraw their bids online up to closing time of tender if they intend not to participate in bidding. In case they have applied rates online then they shall be bound to submit printed tender's documents along with requisite documents to TMA Karak otherwise will be liable to be declared as black listed.
4. Any tender or offer of works made by any enlisted contractors without filling bids online shall be considered as null and void henceforth.
5. The following documents must be attached with the bid such as (i) 2% earnest money in shape of original call deposit in the name of TMO, TMA Karak from scheduled banks (ii). Enlistment copy of Local Council Board for the year 2024-25 (iii). Registration copy of Pakistan Engineering Council for 2024-25 and (iv). Copy of CNIC & (v). Copy of KPRA Registration for 2024-25 for each schemes in a separate envelope highlighting name of work (written over the envelope).
6. Sealed bids must be sent through registered mail / courier service before or on dated fixed for opening and will be opened on the same date at 02:00 PM in the presence of bidders by the tender committee. By hand submission of tender documents will not be accepted and such tender will not be entertained.
7. Bidder who submitted their financial bids without a valid call deposit will be barred from participating in bidding process for one year.
8. The tender shall be processed according to "above / below system" based on market rate system.
9. The engineer estimate is framed on the current MRS 2024 (1<sup>st</sup> Bi-annual).
10. Tender forms and BOQs must be signed by the original contractor.
11. The successful contractors have to pay stamp duty along with all applicable Provincial / Federal Government Taxes issued from time to time.
12. Bid security of some or all the bidders will be retained by the procuring entity till approval of tender / bid validity period.
13. Complete bids both (original and duplicate) must reach to TMA Karak on or before the fixed date as per instruction of the Provincial Government.
14. Incomplete / conditional or telegraphic tenders shall not be accepted.
15. The Department will not be bound to provide any machinery / testing laboratory and the total cost on it will be borne by the contractors themselves.
16. Any bidders who provide incorrect information shall be disqualified.
17. In case of bids become tie the award of contract shall be decided through evaluation which shall be bounded as final.
18. The bidders should be enlisted with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue authority, as per KPPRA rules.
19. Other terms & conditions / guidelines, if required can be obtained from this TMA at any working day during official hours.
20. In case of Solar Project, only those contractors bid shall be entertained, whose Firms have been awarded specified code of Solar and only approved / Registered Company Solar material will be installed.
21. The CDR No. must be the same as it is provided by the contractor in the online tender form, otherwise, the tender form shall be considered as illegal and legal action against the contractor at fault will be initiated. The contractors quoting their bids up to a limit of 10% below Engineer estimate shall submit bid security to the extent of 2% of Engineer Estimate only. The contractor quoting their bids more than 10% below up to 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 TMA Karak and the second lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly. 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 / or required amount of additional security, then the said bid shall be considered as non-responsive. All the securities submitted along with such non-responsive bid shall be forfeited in favour of TMA Karak and the 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly. Furthermore, all others terms & conditions / regulation notified by the KPPRA vide notification No. S.R.O(14)/Vol:1-24/2021-22 dated 10-05-2022/6058-71 in letter and spirit.
22. **Note:-** Work orders of the aforementioned schemes will be issued to the contractor subject to release /availability of fund.

**Tehsil Officer (I&S)**  
TMA Karak

**Tehsil Municipal Officer**  
TMA Karak

INF(P)3553/24





In brief

Sarrazin 'conscious' after training crash

BORMIO (AFP): French skier Cyprien Sarrazin is "conscious" after being airlifted to hospital following a nasty crash Friday during training for a World Cup downhill race in Bormio, Italy. The 30-year-old lost control of his skis and crashed into the protective netting before being evacuated by helicopter. In a brief statement, the French ski federation said Sarrazin was "conscious" and would undergo tests. Sarrazin enjoyed his best campaign on the World Cup circuit last season with four victories, but is yet to win in 2024/25 ahead of Saturday's race in Bormio.

Slot says 'too early' for Liverpool title talk

LIVERPOOL (AFP): Liverpool boss Arne Slot said it was "too early" to say his side were on course for the Premier League title after a 3-1 win over Leicester extended their lead at the top of the table. Liverpool moved seven points clear of second-placed Chelsea, with a game in hand, although Arsenal can climb to within six points when they host Ipswich on Friday. But Dutch manager Slot, in his first season in charge since succeeding Jurgen Klopp, remains cautious about the prospect of bringing the Premier League title to Anfield for the first time since 2020. "If you are in this game for a long time like the players and I am, then 20 games before the end you don't look at it as there are so many challenges ahead of you," he said after goals from Cody Gakpo, Curtis Jones and Mohamed Salah helped turn the tide following Jordan Ayew's early strike for Leicester. "Injuries and a bit of bad luck can happen to any team, it is far too early to be already celebrating — but it is nice for us to be where we are." Slot added: "I don't think there was any easy win for us in any of these games; it could have been an easy win against Tottenham but we conceded two... that tells you how difficult it is to win even when you have all your players available. "That is why we have to take it one game at a time. The league table is something of course we are aware of but we always understand how many games there are to go."

Two die in Sydney to Hobart yacht race

SYDNEY (Agencies): Two people taking part in Australia's annual Sydney to Hobart yacht race have died in separate incidents, according to police. Both crew members died in separate incidents after being hit by a boom — the large pole attached horizontally to the bottom of a sail. The event's organisers said the incidents happened on the Flying Fish Arctos and Bowline. The first boats are expected to arrive in the city of Hobart, in Tasmania, later on Friday or early on Saturday. Several have already retired due to bad weather. New South Wales (NSW) police said the first incident was reported to officers just before midnight on Thursday local time (12:50 GMT) by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority in the country's capital, Canberra. Just over two hours later, at 02:15 on Friday, NSW police were told that crew aboard the second boat were giving CPR to the second person, which also had not worked.

Bosch, Jansen put South Africa on top against Pakistan

CENTURION (AFP): Debutant Corbin Bosch hit 81 not out and left-arm fast bowler Marco Jansen claimed two late wickets as South Africa took control on the second day of the first Test against Pakistan at SuperSport Park on Friday.

Bosch, batting at number nine, enabled South Africa to take a 90-run first innings lead — and the bowlers made it count by taking three wickets before Pakistan could wipe out the deficit.

Pakistan finished the day on 88 for three — still two runs behind.

South Africa would qualify for next year's World Test Championship final for the first time with a victory in either match of this two-Test series.

The contest was evenly poised when opening batsman Aiden Markram was eighth man out for 89 with

South Africa on 213 for eight — just two runs ahead of Pakistan's first innings total of 211.

Four South African wickets had fallen for 35 runs either side of lunch, with Naseem Shah taking three in a fiery spell, and it seemed probable the sides would start the second innings almost on level terms.

But Bosch, who has a first-class batting average above 40, batted with freedom and a wide variety of strokes as he shared stands of 41 with Kagiso Rabada (13) and 47 with Dane Paterson (12) to turn a narrow lead into a substantial one.

Bosch hit 15 fours in a 93-ball innings.

It was the continuation of a remarkable debut for Bosch, 30, who took four for 63 in the first innings and was clocked at 147kmh, the fastest of any bowler in the match.

Bosch, whose Test cricketer father Tertius died when Corbin was five years old, was low on the list of potential Test fast bowlers at the start of the season.

But a lengthy list of injuries to bigger-name players, as well as good recent form, opened the door for him.

Bosch shared the new ball with Kagiso Rabada at the start of Pakistan's second innings but did not take a wicket and left the field at the end of a three-over stint.

Saim Ayub and Shan Masood, who both made 28, put on 49 for the first wicket before Rabada bowled Ayub.

Jansen followed up by having Masood caught at third slip and first innings top-scorer Kamran Ghulam caught at gully for eight before bad light stopped play.



CENTURION: Kagiso Rabada ended Pakistan's quick opening stand, South Africa vs Pakistan, 1st Test day 2.

India lose five after Smith's heroics put Australia in charge of 4th Test

MELBOURNE (AFP): Australia's fiery pace attack destroyed India's top order on Friday to put them in the driving seat of the fourth Test after they set a daunting first innings target on the back of Steve Smith's 34th Test century.

The visitors were 164-5 at the close on day two at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, still 310 runs adrift after Australia was out for 474 soon after lunch, buoyed by Smith's stylish 140. Rishabh Pant was not out six and Ravindra Jadeja on four, with three wickets in the final half-hour bursting India's momentum after they were 153-2.

Scott Boland and skipper Pat Cummins grabbed two wickets each. "Smithy was awesome this morning. He felt so composed and took the game on when he was on top of them," Cummins told Fox Sports. "And then to get a couple of late wickets really sets up the rest of the game."

Skipper Rohit Sharma reverted to his usual role as opener after dropping to six in the past two Tests.

But it did nothing to help his woeful recent form and he was out for three, spooning an attempted pull shot off Cummins to Boland at mid-on for a simple catch. Cummins pounced again to remove the in-form KL Rahul with the last ball before tea, bowling him for 24.

But opener Yashasvi Jaiswal stood firm with a high-quality innings, crunching a series of stylish boundaries in his 82. The 22-year-old, who scored 161 in the first Test at Perth, looked destined for another century but threw his wicket away in a comical mix up with Virat Kohli.

Jaiswal set off for a quick single off Boland but his teammate said no, leaving the youngster stranded, ending a dangerous 102-run stand. Kohli, who was fined 20 percent of his match fee for a day one shoulder charge on Australian debutant Sam Konstas, was caught behind by Alex Carey for 36 off Boland, who then removed nightwatchman Akash Deep without scoring.

Positive energy "We looked like we were in a great position to get big runs, especially when Yashasvi was batting," said Indian spinner Washington Sundar. "But we'll come back and continue to fight tomorrow morning. The energy is very good in the dressing room. We are all positive. There's still three days and a lot of overs to play."

The hosts resumed on 311-6 after a dominant opening day and plundered another 163 runs, with the composed Smith slamming 13 fours and three sixes. Smith padded up again on 68, with Cummins alongside him on eight. They took 15 off one Deep over before Smith hooked Jasprit Bumrah for six to rub salt in the wounds, with India's body language showing their frustration.

Smith reached his 34th Test century with a boundary off Nitish Kumar Reddy, which came on the back of a return to form in the last Test in Brisbane where he made 101. It was a patient innings

from the 35-year-old and moved him alongside four other players on the all-time list of century-makers, including Sunil Gavaskar and Brian Lara. Only six men have scored more, led by Sachin Tendulkar's 51.

With the landmark out of the way, both men began swinging the bat and Cummins paid the price, caught for a fine 49 by Reddy in the deep off Jadeja to end a 112-run stand.

Starc was bowled by Jadeja for 15 in the first over after lunch, with Smith following in bizarre fashion.

Facing Deep, he danced down the wicket looking to drive but got an inside edge, with the ball bouncing off his pads and trickling onto leg stump. Nathan Lyon (13) was the final wicket to fall, lbw to Bumrah who ended with 4-99. The five-match series is locked at 1-1 after India won by 295 runs in Perth before being crushed by 10 wickets in Adelaide. The rain-affected third Test in Brisbane was drawn.

Intra-Tareen Cricket Academy League concluded

F.P. Report

LODHARAN: The Tareen Cricket Academy recently organized the Intra-Tareen Cricket Academy League, showcasing the talent of over 70 players registered with the academy. The league aimed to promote Under-15 and Under-19 players, fostering a platform for emerging cricketing talent.

Four teams—Tareen Tornadoes, Tareen Titans, Tareen Sultan, and Tareen Knights—participated in the tournament. The final match was held between Tareen Sultan and Tareen Titans, where the Titans triumphed with a 67-run victory. Umar Tariq was awarded Player of the



Match in the final, while Zahid Sindhi was recognized as Player of the Tournament.

Hussain Ali, grandson of Jahangir Khan Tareen, was the chief guest at the event. He presented the winner's trophy to

Mubashir Ali, captain of the Tareen Titans, and the runner-up trophy to Shoaib Bilal, captain of the Tareen Sultan team. Hussain Ali also commended the players for their dedication and sportsmanship.

Rybakina helps Kazakhstan win United Cup opener

PERTH (Agencies): Elena Rybakina marked her United Cup debut by helping Kazakhstan to a 2-1 victory over Spain at the season-opening tournament in Perth, Australia.

The 25-year-old, who was Wimbledon champion in 2022, beat Jessica Bouzas Maneiro 6-2 6-3 to level the match after Pablo Carreno Busta defeated Alexander Shevchenko 6-2 6-1 to give Spain the lead.

Rybakina, the world number six, then partnered Shevchenko to a 7-6 (7-4) 6-7 (2-7) 10-7 win against Carreno Busta and Yvonne Cavalle-Reimers in the mixed doubles.

Great Britain will get their campaign under way against Argentina on Monday, before facing Australia on Wednesday.

Kazakhstan will qualify for the quarter-finals of the 18-nation mixed teams



event if they defeat Greece in their second Group C match on Monday.

Rybakina, playing for the first time since beginning work with fellow former Wimbledon winner Goran Ivanisevic as her new coach, said: "The first match is always difficult."

"It's not easy to get used [to it] that quick but I'm pretty happy with the way I played today." The third edition of the United

Cup runs until 5 January 2025, with matches taking place in Perth and Sydney.

GB's group fixture against Australia will see British women's number one Katie Boulter face fiance Alex de Minaur. The couple announced their engagement earlier this week. The Australian Open, the first Grand Slam of the season, begins on Sunday, 12 January.

Four last-gasp finishes on dramatic night in NBA

NEW YORK (Agencies): The Portland Trail Blazers' Scoot Henderson scored the game-winning basket with 0.1 seconds remaining in one of four last-gasp finishes in the NBA on Thursday.

Henderson's step-back jumper gave the Trail Blazers two points and sealed a 122-120 win against the Utah Jazz.

In Miami, Tyler Herro sank a 15-footer with 0.5 seconds to go to complete a 89-88 for the Miami Heat against state rivals the Orlando Magic.

There might have still been time for Orlando to have the last shot but Jalen Suggs' long three-point attempt rimmed out and was ruled to have come after the buzzer.

The most unlikely win came for the Detroit Pistons as Jaden Ivey scored a three-pointer while being fouled, with 3.1 seconds on the clock,

and sank the subsequent free throw to complete a 114-113 win against the Sacramento Kings.

The Pistons had trailed by 10 points inside the final three minutes. And in Washington, Jordan Poole's three-pointer with 8.7 seconds left helped the Washington Wizards beat the Charlotte Hornets.

Poole's basket put the Wizards 112-110 ahead before Charlotte's Brandon Miller missed from distance with six seconds to go, and Washington's Justin Champagnie hit one of two free throws as the Wizards completed a 113-110 victory.

Washington trailed by 21 points in the first half and remain bottom of the Eastern Conference despite a fifth win of the season.

In Thursday's other fixtures, the Oklahoma City Thunder beat the Indiana Pacers 120-114 for their

ninth straight win.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 45 points for the Western Conference leaders.

The Memphis Grizzlies, currently third behind the Thunder, scored 155 points — the most in their franchise history — in a 155-126 win against the Toronto Raptors.

Jalen Jackson Jr and rookie Zach Edey both notched 21-point double-doubles.

Jalen Johnson scored a career-high 30 points to help the Atlanta Hawks come from behind to beat the Chicago Bulls 141-133. Jalen Green weighed in with 30 points as the Houston Rockets beat the struggling New Orleans Pelicans 128-111 and Cameron Johnson contributed 29 points in the Brooklyn Nets' 111-105 victory against the Milwaukee Bucks.

Swiatek not expecting WADA appeal over doping scandal

SYDNEY (Agencies): World number two Iga Swiatek said on Friday she was ready to put a drugs scandal behind her, insisting there was no reason for the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) to appeal against her case. The 23-year-old Pole tested positive for the heart medication trimetazidine (TMZ) in an out-of-competition sample in August when she was ranked number one.

However, the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) accepted that the violation was not intentional and she escaped with a one-month sanction that saw her miss three tournaments in Asia and lose her top ranking.

News of the saga only emerged in late November and she will play her first tournament since then at the mixed-teams United Cup in Sydney ahead of the Australian Open next month.

Swiatek said that, while the incident had been "mentally tough", the public response had been generally positive, allaying fears that she would be ostracised. "I think people, most of them, are understanding," said the five-time Grand Slam champion.

"And the ones who read the documents and are aware of how the system works, they know that I had no fault and I had no influence on what was going on."

"I try to just go on with my life and focus on different things, focus on preparing for the season and on tennis, because this is the best thing you can do after a case like that," she said. Her case is similar to that of Italian men's world number one Jannik Sinner. He was exonerated by the ITIA for twice testing positive for traces of the steroid clostebol in March. But WADA appealed against the decision in September and he is awaiting the outcome.

Liverpool survive Leicester scare to go seven points clear



LIVERPOOL (AFP/APP): Curtis Jones fired Liverpool seven points clear at the top of the Premier League as the title favourites survived a scare in their 3-1 win against struggling Leicester on Thursday.

Arne Slot's side were shocked by Jordan Ayew's early strike at Anfield, but the leaders recovered their composure to equalise just before the interval through Cody Gakpo.

England midfielder Jones marked his 100th top-flight appearance with the second goal soon after half-time.

Mohamed Salah's 19th goal this term wrapped up Liverpool's 11th win in their last 13 games in all competitions.

Liverpool's comeback lifted them well clear of second-placed Chelsea, who were beaten 2-1 by Fulham earlier in the day.

"Because we went 1-0 down it was a game before we made it 3-1 and then I think you saw how good we really are," Slot said.

The rampant Reds, who hold a game in hand on Chelsea, have been beaten just once in 17 league matches this season.

They have won 22 of their 26 games in all competitions in a remarkable run since Slot arrived from Feyenoord in the close-season to replace Jurgen Klopp.

Klopp led Liverpool to

their last Premier League title in 2020 and Slot has them perfectly positioned to emulate that feat in the second half of the season.

"It's bit of a boring answer, but as a manager you go game by game because you know how many you still have to play," Slot said of Liverpool's title bid.

"You see especially in the Premier League results that you didn't expect because teams have so much quality."

"Maybe if it was the Eredivisie it would feel like this but not in this competition."

Also through to the League Cup semi-finals and top of the Champions League, Liverpool, who travel to West Ham for their last match of the year on Sunday, will go into 2025 in contention of an unprecedented quadruple.

Third-bottom Leicester are one point from safety after a third consecutive defeat.

Salah nearly gave Liverpool the perfect start as his close-range effort smacked the post.

But on a night when Anfield was surrounded by a murky mist, Liverpool's defence was lost in the fog in the sixth minute.

- Relentless pressure - Stephy Mavididi surged away down the left wing and whipped in a low cross which Ayew controlled

adroitly before spinning to smash a low shot past Alisson Becker at his near post.

Liverpool's defence was unusually lax in the early stages and Leicester's Bilal El Khannouss was left unmarked for a volley that whistled over.

But the tide soon turned and Darwin Nunez met Trent Alexander-Arnold's cross with a header that was deflected behind before Salah's chipped effort looped onto the roof of the net.

Andrew Robertson was inches away from equalising when the Liverpool defender's header cannoned off the post.

Slot's men were pouring forward in waves and Salah's curler ricocheted off the crossbar just before half-time.

Gakpo ensured Liverpool would be rewarded for their relentless pressure on the stroke of half-time as the Dutch forward stroked a superb strike into the top corner from the edge of the area.

Gakpo's 10th goal in all competitions this season was a familiar sight for Leicester boss Ruud van Nistelrooy, who coached him during their time at PSV Eindhoven.

Leicester haven't won at Anfield in the Premier League since 2000 and their hopes of a historic victory were in tatters just four minutes into the second half.

Sweeping into the Leicester area in a blur of pace and movement, Salah and Alexis Mac Allister teed up Jones to slot home from close range, with the goal surviving a lengthy VAR check for a potential offside.

Salah put the final flourish on Liverpool's stirring fightback, cutting in from the right flank to guide a fine finish into the far corner in the 82nd minute.





## In brief

### Air University students visit Senate

ISLAMABAD (APP): A delegation of 58 students and faculty members from Air University Islamabad visited the Senate of Pakistan at the Parliament House on Friday. The group was warmly received by senior officials of the Senate and began their visit with a tour of the Senate Museum. They watched a documentary showcasing the history and evolution of the Upper House of Parliament and explored various exhibits, including statues of prominent politicians and historical photographs, which captivated their interest. The delegation also visited the Senate Hall, where they received a comprehensive briefing on the Senate's proceedings, legislative functions, and role in the parliamentary system of Pakistan. Expressing their gratitude, the students and faculty described the visit as highly informative and enriching. They thanked the Senate officials for their hospitality and for providing a deeper understanding of the workings of the Parliament House.

### Car plunges into canal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Three individuals killed when a speeding car plunged into a canal near Khanpur Mehr in Ghotki on Friday. According to private news channel, five people were traveling in the car at the time of the accident. Rescue teams reached the spot immediately after the incident was reported and managed to save two passengers, while the bodies of the other three victims were retrieved from the canal. Rescue officials stated that the strong water currents made the operation challenging. Police confirmed that one of the deceased, Faqeer Ilyas, was from Shahdarpur, while another victim, Wajahat Juno, has also been identified. The third deceased, Faqeer Mocharo Mehr, was a resident of Khangarh.

### ANF seizes 49 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting four operations recovered 49,250 kg drugs worth over Rs 5.4 million and arrested five suspects, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Friday. He informed that 250 grams hashish was recovered from an accused arrested near a university in Rawalpindi. The arrested accused confessed to selling drugs to the students of educational institutions. In another operation, 44.4 kg hashish and 2.4 kg opium hidden in a vehicle near New Muhammadabad Gujranwala were recovered and two suspects were arrested. 1.2 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of the accused near Iqbal Shaheed Toll Plaza Attack. In fourth operation, 1 kg heroin was recovered from a woman netted near GT Road Attack. Cases have been registered against the arrested suspects under the Narcotics Control Act and further investigations are under process.

### Police hold murder accused

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawat Police on Thursday arrested a proclaimed offender who had murdered a citizen over a minor dispute in 2022. The accused Abid Ali and his accomplices had shot dead Junaid and injured Nasir, the Rawalpindi Police spokesman said. The accused had been on the run for the last two years while his two accomplices had already been arrested. The Rawat Police traced the proclaimed offender using all means including human intelligence, the spokesman said.

# Govt capable to sail through external pressures: Senator warns

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-N Senator Afnan Ullah Friday termed Pakistan's sovereignty 'non-negotiable' said the country would not tolerate any interference in its internal affairs.

In an interview with a private news channel, Afnan said the government would not succumb to any external pressure.

The PML-N Senator

said the country successfully navigated through similar threats in the past and recalled a strong response by former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif with his decision of nuclear tests as a deterrent.

He criticized PTI's founder Imran Khan for seemingly relying on external powers to take him out of jail. PTI is putting national interests at risk in order to conceal its

own wrongdoings, he added.

Stressing the need for political stability and unity, he said, PTI needed to prioritize national interests over personal matters.

The approach of addressing the country's pressing issues, such as economic growth, security and social development would ultimately benefit the country and its citizens, he said.

## BISP organizes Quran recitation event on BB's death anniversary

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) organized a Quran recitation event at the BISP Auditorium to pay tribute to Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto on her 17th martyrdom anniversary.

The employees of BISP Headquarters actively participated in this solemn and blessed occasion.

On the special instructions of Chairperson BISP Senator Rubina Khalid, Quran and Fateha recitation ceremonies were also held in all BISP offices across the country.

Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto conceived the idea of the Benazir Income Support Programme during her exile in Dubai.

This visionary concept was realized in 2008 by the then-President of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari.

The Benazir Income Support Programme is Pakistan's largest social protection initiative. It continues to empower underprivileged women economically, making a significant positive impact on their lives.

At the conclusion of the Quran recitation, special

prayers were offered for the eternal peace of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, her elevated ranks in the hereafter, the continuation of her mission to serve humanity, and the prosperity of Pakistan and progress of BISP.

BISP staff paid heartfelt tribute to Benazir Bhutto for her remarkable public service and sacrifices.

They reaffirmed their commitment to her vision of strengthening women's empowerment and enhancing the social security system in Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: BISP employees offering Fateha during a ceremony commemorating the death anniversary of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto.

## CDA, NAB join hands to strengthen accountability

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA), Muhammad Ali Randhawa, held a meeting with Director General National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Rawalpindi, Mirza Irfan Baig, here on Friday.

The meeting marked a significant step towards bolstering transparency and accountability processes within the CDA. Both leaders expressed their commitment to enhancing mutual cooperation and coordination between the two institutions.

Chairman Randhawa emphasized the CDA's ongoing efforts to promote efficiency and transparency in its operations.

Highlighting the authority's focus on reducing human intervention, he noted that CDA is increasingly adopting automation and technology-based systems to streamline office processes and minimize the potential for corruption.

The Chairman reiterated the CDA's dedication to working closely with NAB and leveraging its technical expertise to further improve accountability

mechanisms. He assured that the CDA would continue to adopt best practices to maintain a corruption-free environment.

DG NAB Mirza Irfan Baig lauded the CDA's efforts to promote transparency and assured the authority of NAB's full support in achieving shared goals of integrity and accountability.

The meeting concluded with both sides reaffirming their resolve to strengthen collaboration for a transparent and efficient governance framework.

## ITP issues 64,395 new driving licenses in 2024

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) took action against over 800,000 vehicles and motorcycles for traffic violations during the year of 2024, an ITP spokesperson said on Friday.

He told APP that legal actions were initiated against 1,019 individuals for severe violations of traffic laws. He added that 300 individuals were issued legal notices after the suspension of driving licenses and route permits for transport vehicles. The spokesperson mentioned that over 10,000 vehicles and more than 40,000 motorcycles were impounded for serious violations at various police stations.

Additionally, fines were imposed on 100,000 vehicles for illegal parking, 64,000 for using fancy number plates, and over 17,000 for having tinted windows.

The ITP also issued tickets for traffic violations, including 56,000 for motorcyclists without helmets, 16,000 for overloading, and

over 25,000 for lane violations. In 2024, the ITP issued 64,395 internationally recognized driving licenses, renewed 62,876 licenses, and provided over 112,000 learner permits to citizens seeking driving licenses.

The spokesperson further shared that during the year, the ITP managed over 7,000 events, including the SCO Summit and the arrival of national and international delegations, ensuring smooth traffic flow and public safety. The spokesperson also noted that 30 ITP officers were injured while performing their duties throughout the year.

Moreover, over 600,000 citizens received road safety and traffic law awareness, and 893 workshops on traffic laws were organized.

The ITP also introduced several citizen-friendly initiatives, including "Facilitation and Education on Wheels" and the establishment of a Highway One Night Patrol Unit.

To ensure a well-maintained

traffic system in the federal capital, the ITP activated a Traffic Response Unit and established six dedicated traffic counters at Police Khidmat Markaz.

Online services, such as license renewals, and doorstep assistance for citizens over 70 years of age, were also provided.

Furthermore, the ITP established a Traffic Police Education Complex to raise awareness about traffic laws and installed signboards on highways to guide citizens.

In its efforts to promote community policing, the ITP facilitated seven "Friends of Police" badges and four "Police Volunteers" badges, with their internships completed during the year.

The ITP also conducted five flower candy campaigns and two road safety workshops in collaboration with private companies. During developmental projects in various areas of Islamabad, the ITP ensured uninterrupted traffic flow, despite ongoing construction.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman, Press Council of Pakistan, Arshad Khan Jadoon meeting Ambassador of Iran, Dr. Reza Amiri-Moghaddam at Iran Embassy. —APP Photo

## Naqvi inaugurates sector C-14 Development Project

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a major development, Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi on Friday inaugurated development work in Sector C-14, Islamabad, marking a significant milestone for the city's residents.

It is to be noted that the booking of plots in Sector C-14 will be until December 30, while the open draw for allotment will be held on January 14. The Interior minister reviewed the development work in detail. He tasked the CDA to complete the development works of Sector C-14 by February 15.

Mohsin Naqvi said that Sector C-14 is being offered exclusively for overseas Pakistanis and local residents. He stated that Sector C-14 is located at a prime location in Islamabad, which is designed for a better and peaceful lifestyle. He directed the concerned authorities to further expedite the sector development work in view of the growing population of Islamabad and to complete development works in all pending sectors.

Visiting the newly constructed site, the Interior Minister directed the CDA authorities to ensure timely

possession of plots to the allottees after the completion of the development works. He also ordered the CDA authorities to take indiscriminate action against the encroachment mafia.

He said that no concession should be made against the encroachment mafia on the land of Margalla Hills National Park. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa briefed the Interior Minister regarding the development works. While giving the briefing, he said that special priority will be given to Overseas Pakistanis in

Sector C-14. He said that bookings can be made till December 30, 2024, to get plots in Sector C-14.

Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa also briefed the Interior Minister regarding the development works of Sector I-12. Chairman CDA said that the development works of Sector I-12 are in the final stages of completion and possession will be handed over to the allottees soon. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa and senior concerned officials were also accompanying the Interior Minister during the visit.

## Iranian ambassador, PCP chairman join hands to combat fake news

ISLAMABAD (APP): Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan, Reza Amiri Moghadam and Press Council of Pakistan (PCP) Chairman, Arshad Khan Jadoon on Friday reaffirmed their commitment to enhancing media collaboration between Iran and Pakistan as part of a broader strategy to counter the growing menace of fake news.

During the meeting here at the Iranian Embassy, both dignitaries underscored the critical importance of tackling disinformation that threatens societal harmony. They agreed that fostering strong media ties between the two nations is essential to portraying a positive image of both countries on the global stage.

Ambassador Moghadam emphasized the need for cultural exchange through the sharing of dramas and movies between the two countries. "We must use media as a bridge to promote cultural cohesion and mutual understanding among our peoples," he stated. He also assured full support from the Iranian side to further strengthen bilateral media cooperation.

Chairman Jadoon provided an overview of the PCP's constitutional mandate, highlighting its role in addressing fake news and promoting ethical journalism. He outlined PCP's efforts in monitoring media practices and ensuring adherence to the code of ethics to maintain journalistic integrity.

Chairman Jadoon emphasized that

the agenda of Prime Minister Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif to combat fake news is a critical issue facing the entire world. He highlighted the importance of strengthening bilateral ties to address misinformation and to collaboratively work towards the development of journalists in both countries.

The meeting concluded with a shared resolve to foster meaningful media partnerships and adopt innovative measures to counter fake news, contributing to a more harmonious and informed society. On this occasion, Chairman Jadoon graciously presented the traditional Sindhi Ajrak (shawl) and Topi (cap), along with a bouquet, as a gesture of hospitality and cultural significance.

## MoHR holds 7th meeting of Task Force on human rights

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Human Rights (MoHR) convened the 7th Meeting of the National Task Force constituted for implementation of Action Plan on Human Rights.

The meeting was co-chaired by Barrister Aqeel Malik, MNA/Advisor to Law Division, Senator, Dr. Afnan Ullah and Mr. A.D. Khawaja, Secretary Ministry of Human Rights. The representative of the relevant departments of the federal and provincial governments including Home, Human Rights, Women Development, Police attended the meeting.

In the meeting, the participants shared their progress on the decisions taken in the 6th meeting of the Task Force. The Action Plan on Human Rights approved by the Prime Minister on 13th February, 2016, revised in 2020 consisting six thematic areas for taking legislative, policy and programmatic measures in line with constitutional requirements and international commitments by the relevant departments of the federal and provincial governments, was taken as agenda.

This Action Plan is being implemented across Pakistan under the supervision of National Task Force on Human Rights. The Secretary, MoHR, emphasized to expedite the progress

on the decisions of the previous meeting by the provincial governments, particularly strengthening of Treaty Implementation Cell (TIC) in Punjab and Sindh whereas establishment of such TIC Secretariat in Balochistan and KP for coordination and preparation of Obligatory Periodic Reports on Seven Core ratified Human Rights Conventions, GSP+ and other regional commitments, by the Ministry of Human Rights, as well as re-activation of provincial Task Forces, District Human Rights Committees.

The participants were also encouraged to accelerate their efforts for proposed legislation on prohibition of child marriages, in KP, Balochistan and Punjab. Whereas, the government of Sindh, which has already enacted the law, was requested to ensure its implementation. The provincial representatives were advised by the Chair to complete the process of appointment of Chairperson and Members of the Provincial Commission on the Status of Women on priority basis except Balochistan where the Commission is already functional.

Besides, Sub-Committee, constituted under the Chair of Barrister Aqeel Malik, MNA/Advisor to Law Division, presented its report pre-

pared to review the reasons behind low ranking of Pakistan in Gender Parity Report, launched by World Economic Forum, 2024 and suggest way-forward to improve Pakistan's score on Gender Development Index.

While discussing the significance of statistical data on various human rights issues, the provincial governments were requested to establish Gender Management Information System, in addition to preparation of Gender Parity Report on annual basis, following the model of Punjab.

The participants were also apprised about the upcoming EU project on Human Rights to be implemented in Pakistan through UNDP with the financial support of EU. The provincial governments were asked to share their priority areas to improve the human rights situation, in consultation with relevant departments.

Moreover, the participants delineated the responsibilities on human rights between the Federal and Provincial Departments in view of 18th Amendments to the Constitution, in addition to discussion on establishment of Human Rights Working Groups at the federal, headed by SAPM on National Security as well as in the provinces under the Chair of Chief Secretaries.

## VC AIOU emphasizes quality education & modern technology

ISLAMABAD (APP): Vice-Chancellor, Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood emphasized the commitment to provide quality education to students and leverage modern technology to enhance the efficiency of the regional network of the university.

He expressed these views while addressing the concluding ceremony of a two-day conference, Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Mahmood

announced the introduction of performance-based awards for the first time in 2024 to recognize the best-performing regional campuses and employees, said a press release on Friday.

Performance based awards were divided into two categories as top ten performing regional campuses and outstanding employees. In the first category, Karachi Regional Campus secured the first position, followed by Thatta

in second place and Quetta in third. Additionally, awards were presented to the regional offices of Dera Murad Jamali, Kalat, Abbottabad, Peshawar, Multan, Kohat, and Mirpur.

In the second category, 23 officers from the Directorate of Regional Services in Islamabad and various regional centers across Pakistan were honored with cash prizes, shields, and certificates for their exemplary performance.

He encouraged employees who were not recognized this year to strive for further improvement in their performance, ensuring excellence in their duties and responsibilities.

The conference was attended by 53 regional directors from across Pakistan with the objective to ponder over ways and measures to provide quality education to the doorstep of students in all parts of the country and even abroad.



### NDC has built a rail for the first time

KABUL (Ariana News): Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate, has announced that the National Development Corporation (NDC) has successfully built a rail for the first time in Afghanistan. Previously, Mujahid also revealed that the NDC had produced both a freight truck and a passenger vehicle, further highlighting the corporation's growing role in boosting Afghanistan's industrial capabilities.

### Afghanistan launches green tea plantation

KABUL (Xinhua/APP): The Afghan caretaker government began a green tea plantation in eastern Khost province to bolster local products, reported the state-run Bakhtar news agency on Friday. Aimed at enhancing local products, the cultivation of the valuable plant as a pilot project was launched recently in the Gurbuz district of the province, it added. Farmers in the war-torn country have had limited experience with tea cultivation over the past decade.

## Afghanistan, Kazakhstan aim to triple trade volume to \$3 Billion



KABUL (TOLONews): Nooruddin Azizi, acting minister of industry and commerce, announced at a government media center event that an agreement has been reached to increase the trade volume between Afghanistan and Kazakhstan to \$3 billion.

Azizi, explaining the outcomes of the Islamic Emirate and Kazakhstan delegations' visits, stated that the current trade volume between Afghanistan and Kazakhstan is approximately \$1 billion, with Afghanistan's exports to Kazakhstan being minimal.

According to the acting minister of industry and commerce, during the meetings between the two delegations, agreements worth \$100 million were signed. Additionally, a roadmap for cooperation in various sectors was agreed upon, which, when implemented, will raise the trade volume between the two countries to \$3 billion.

The private sectors of Afghanistan

and Kazakhstan reached agreements on the following points:

1. Emphasis on implementing the roadmap to increase trade volume to \$3 billion.
2. Kazakhstan's readiness to import potatoes, cotton, pomegranates, figs, and other fruits.
3. Launching direct flights between Kabul and Almaty by airlines of both countries.
4. Kazakhstan's support and readiness to cooperate on the railway project.
5. Allocation of a space for Afghan goods at the Khorgos Port.
6. Expansion of banking relations between the two countries.
7. Formation of a committee to resolve trade disputes.

Nooruddin Azizi stated: "The commitment we previously made with the Republic of Kazakhstan is to increase our trade volume from about \$1 billion to \$3 billion. Afghanistan,

by the grace of Allah, has mineral resources, agricultural products, precious and semi-precious stones, dried fruits, and carpets to offer."

Azizi described Kazakhstan as an excellent market for Afghan products, adding that to boost trade, customs tariffs on Kazakh goods will be reduced.

The acting minister of industry and commerce said: "The food material tariffs in Afghanistan are already very low, and if any adjustments are needed in the plans, we will cooperate, God willing. We will reduce tariffs, facilitate transportation, and work to minimize the time and effort for truck movement." On the other side, Kazakhstan's deputy minister of trade and integration, Kairat Torebayev, described the agreements as beneficial for both countries. He also assured the continuation of Kazakhstan's humanitarian aid to Afghanistan.

Kairat Torebayev said: "We place great importance on cooperation with Afghanistan, its people, and Afghan companies. Therefore, the main focus is trade, particularly with the Ministry of Commerce."

This week, we brought a large delegation of about 40 individuals, including representatives of the private sector. There are several areas where we seek cooperation, primarily in mining, telecommunications, IT, transportation, and more."

A delegation of the Islamic Emirate, led by the acting minister of industry and commerce, visited Kazakhstan on the 27th Mizan of this solar year to participate in the second Afghan-Kazakh exhibition. In this three-day exhibition, 250 Afghan traders showcased Afghan products and goods in various sectors.

## Kabir: Doha agreement does not define nature of our system

KABUL (TOLONews): Deputy Prime Minister for Political Affairs Mawlawi Abdul Kabir said the caretaker government is working within the framework of Islamic principles to expand relations with the world.

Speaking at a graduation ceremony in Paktia province, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir stressed that the Islamic Emirate brings a message of peace and unity, but warned that if any party resorts to violence, they will face a serious response.

He stressed that with the establishment of the Islamic system, there is no justification for war in Afghanistan, and Afghans will always defend their religious and national values without hesitation.

He clarified that the Doha Agreement was not about the United States dictating governance to the Islamic Emirate but was solely about the timeline for the withdrawal of US



forces from Afghanistan.

Mawlawi Abdul Kabir said: "Do not be deceived about the Doha Agreement. In Doha, Qatar, the Islamic Emirate made commitments with the Americans, but these commitments were not about them dictating how our system should operate. It was merely about scheduling the withdrawal of US forces."

The Islamic Emirate official praised the activities of schools and

madrasas in remote areas and stated that the Islamic Emirate is fully committed to developing all educational centers without any discrimination.

He also emphasized that all citizens who worked under the previous regime have been pardoned by the Islamic Emirate.

Mawlawi Abdul Kabir said: "Over the past 20 years, anyone who worked with the Americans or NATO was pardoned after

the Islamic Emirate came to power. Whether they were soldiers or members of parliament, no Mujahid has troubled them because our conflict was with foreign forces."

Some political experts believe that to strengthen the Islamic Emirate's relations with the world and maintain stability in the country, interactions with regional and global countries must be enhanced.

"If any country lacks relations with its neighbors or the international community, it is like a paralyzed person. Therefore, we must strengthen our relations with all nations as much as international relations demand," said Moeen Gul Samkanai, a political analyst.

Earlier, the deputy prime minister for political affairs announced that the Islamic Emirate has established direct relations with countries worldwide.

## Islamic Emirate condemns Soviet invasion, honors Afghan Jihad



KABUL (TOLONews): Yesterday (Thursday), the Islamic Emirate commemorated the 6th of Jadi, the day marking the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan, in a program held in Kabul.

Hamdullah Fitrat, deputy spokesman of the Islamic Emirate, stated at the event that during the Soviet invasion, all values, including religion, freedom, social security, and the country's development, faced serious threats.

The deputy spokesman of the Islamic Emirate said: "The Islamic Emirate condemns the Soviet Union's invasion on the 6th of Jadi, takes pride in the jihad and sacrifices of Afghans against it, and prays for paradise for all martyrs of the jihad against the Soviet aggression, and rewards for the injured and disabled."

Amir Khan Muttaqi, acting minister of foreign affairs, also spoke at the event, emphasizing the need to educate the youth

with an Afghan and Islamic mindset to prevent Afghanistan from being occupied by other countries in the future.

The acting minister of foreign affairs said: "Even now, if you want Afghanistan to avoid such harm in the future, the nation and youth must be educated with an Islamic and Afghan mindset. Opportunities for education must be created in homes, and special attention should be given to nurturing them."

Meanwhile, the acting minister of information and culture also addressed the gathering, stating that the Islamic Emirate does not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries and will not tolerate others' interference in Afghanistan's internal matters.

Khairullah Khairkhwah said that the Afghan people have defeated three empires in the country so far.

Khairullah Khairkhwah further stated: "Afghans are known throughout history for respecting others and living honorably. Their dignity is such that one might doubt their ability to achieve anything; however, if anyone challenges them, history will show who and how three great empires have been defeated by them."

Abdul Latif Mansoor, acting minister of energy and water, said: "These were the communist ideologies and the intentions of the Russians, who sought to corrupt the thoughts and beliefs of our generation."

Finally, on the 26th of Hamal, 1367 solar year, based on the Geneva Accords signed by the former Soviet Union, the United States, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan ended. Soviet forces withdrew from Afghanistan on the 26th of Dalwa, 1368.

## Reunited after 16 years: a tale of recovery and family

HERAT (TOLONews): A man in Herat, who recovered from addiction after 16 years of substance abuse, homelessness, and separation from his family, has been reunited with his loved ones.

The man, identified as Abdul Saboor, has spent the past year receiving treatment at the addiction treatment center in Herat.

Sixteen years ago, Abdul Saboor became addicted to drugs in Iran, leading to his separation from his family. Throughout this time, he had no contact with them. Abdul Saboor, originally from Sar-e-Pol province, is the father of one son and two daughters.

Reflecting on his past, Abdulsaboor said: "For these 16 years, I couldn't even remember myself, let alone my family. I didn't even know if I was alive or not."

Abdul Saboor spent more than a decade living

on the streets of Herat alongside other addicts.

According to Abdul Saboor's relatives, his family had believed he was no longer alive and had lost all hope of his return.

Amrullah, one of Abdul Saboor's relatives, said: "There is a celebration in our village because he has been found. People haven't seen him yet, but we've sent them his pictures. Right now, it's like a festival in our area."

Reza, Abdul Saboor's nephew, said: "We lost him 16 years ago. We couldn't find him anywhere. Even when we went to Iran and distributed his photos, we couldn't locate him."

According to local officials in Herat, many addicts undergoing treatment at the addiction treatment center have been separated from their families for years without any communication.

Nazimuddin Shami,



head of Education and Training at the Counter-Narcotics Department in Herat, stated: "Someone from Nijrab district in Kapisa province found my contact number and asked if someone named Ahmad or Mahmood was at this camp. Through this connection, we identified nine other people. Among them, there were even individuals

whose families had held funeral ceremonies for them, believing they had passed away."

Statistics indicate that approximately 4,000 addicts are currently undergoing treatment at the addiction treatment hospital in Herat. Many of those who recover return home after years of separation and loneliness.

## Uzbekistan interested in investing in Afghan infrastructure: Karimi

KABUL (TOLONews): Bilal Karimi, the Islamic Emirate's ambassador to China, met with Uzbekistan's ambassador in Beijing to discuss expanding political, economic, and trade relations.

During the meeting, the Uzbekistan ambassador expressed interest in investing in Afghanistan's cement, electricity, and other sectors.

The Afghan ambassador described the establishment of a joint market in S u r k h a n d a r y a , Uzbekistan, as a significant advancement and called for further progress and cooperation in transit and trade sectors.

Qutbuddin Yaqubi, an economic expert, stated: "Uzbekistan, as Afghanistan's neighbor, holds a strategic geographical position and can play a significant role in investment, particularly in



developing and strengthening Afghanistan's infrastructure."

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Economy highlighted the benefits of foreign investments for Afghanistan's economic growth.

The ministry's spokesperson said that countries such as Qatar, Iran, Turkey, Uzbekistan, and China are actively investing in various sec-

tors in Afghanistan.

Abdul Rahman Habib, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Economy, said: "Foreign investments enhance economic cooperation between countries. Apart from China, countries like Qatar, Turkey, Iran, Uzbekistan, and some companies with extensive international experience are interested in investing and have already initiated projects

in some sectors."

Meanwhile, several traders emphasized the need for greater facilitation in various areas, including transportation, with regional countries.

Omid Haidari, a trader, said: "The only remaining issue is with Kazakhstan. We urge the Kazakh leadership to allow transit permits for our transport vehicles so we can access Moscow via Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, and from Moscow to other destinations."

Earlier, the Uzbekistan ambassador, during a meeting with Abdul Salam Hanafi, the administrative deputy prime minister, also stressed strengthening relations in various fields, including establishing healthcare centers, importing medicine, setting up cement factories, and purchasing and trading coal from Afghanistan.

## Qosh Tepa Canal phase 2 surpasses 81% completion

KABUL (Ariana News): In a significant milestone for Afghanistan's infrastructure development, officials from the National Development Corporation (NDC) have announced that the second phase of the Qosh Tepa Canal in northern Afghanistan is now 81 percent complete, with the construction of its dam progressing steadily at 67 percent.

This ambitious project is poised to transform the region, enhancing irrigation systems and boosting agricultural productivity.

The ongoing work on this irrigation project is taking place in the Andkhoy district of Faryab province, where hundreds of machines are actively involved.

NDC officials have confirmed that the second phase of the canal will be completed in the coming months.

Nabiullah Arghandiwal, spokesperson for the NDC, stated, "The second phase of the Qosh Tepa Canal is currently 81 percent complete, with thousands of machines and workers engaged in the project."

Arghandiwal also highlighted the construction of six large bridges along the canal in Balkh and Jawzjan provinces. Two of the bridges are completed, and the remaining four are expected to be operational soon.

Economic experts believe that once completed, the canal will help Afghanistan achieve self-sufficien-

cy in grain production and generate numerous job opportunities in various sectors.

Young workers involved in the project have expressed their satisfaction with the employment opportunities it provides. They are calling on the government to launch similar development projects to combat youth unemployment.

Abdul Ghani, a worker, remarked, "This project is progressing very well, and I urge the Islamic Emirate to implement similar projects."

It is important to note that the entire funding for the Qosh Tepa Canal project is sourced from domestic revenue.

## 14.8 million Afghans face food insecurity this winter, UNICEF reports

KABUL (Amu Tv): Food insecurity in Afghanistan remains a pressing concern as 14.8 million people are

projected to face critical shortages during the winter months, the UN International Children's Emergency Fund

(UNICEF) said.

The figure accounts for 32 percent of the Afghan population, who will

require urgent humanitarian food assistance from November 2024 to March 2025. UNICEF's report underscores the challenges facing the nation, citing a fragile economy, limited access to basic services, and the lingering effects of 40 years of conflict. These issues are compounded by natural disasters, climate shocks, and shifting political dynamics in the region.

Afghan returnees face heightened challenges

The humanitarian crisis is exacerbated by the ongoing influx of Afghan returnees from Pakistan. Since mid-September 2023, more than 758,000 individuals have been registered crossing back into Afghanistan. UNICEF has

been providing aid at border points like Torkham and Spin Boldak, offering health services, polio vaccination campaigns, clean water and sanitation (WASH), nutrition programs, and child protection interventions.

"UNICEF continues to support the response," the report stated, emphasizing the agency's efforts to mitigate the growing humanitarian challenges.

Voices of Hardship

The report also highlighted the human toll of the crisis, with individuals like Mahboba, a former employee of a private organization in Badghis, offering a glimpse into life under Taliban rule.

"For five or six years, I

worked and earned 21,000 Afghani a month. I was the sole breadwinner for my family," she said. "But for the past two years, the Taliban have prohibited me from working. Now, I can't even provide one meal a day for my children."

Mahboba, who cares for a family of five, described the winter as a season of unbearable sorrow. "We don't have proper food to eat. Winter has come, and we don't know what to eat, what to wear, or what to do. There is absolutely no way forward," she said.

Others share similar struggles. In Herat, a resident described waiting in vain for work each day. "There are eight people in my family, and there's no

labor available," he said. "The price of rice, oil—everything—has gone up. We can't afford it."

Abdullah, a resident of Kabul, spoke of the desperate measures families are taking. "I dismantled my chair to keep my forty-day-old baby warm because we don't have coal," he said. "Since morning, I've only earned ten Afghani. How can we survive this way?"

Shrinking aid amid funding shortages

The World Food Programme (WFP) has warned that the situation may worsen, as millions of Afghans are set to endure a harsh winter without adequate food assistance. Severe funding shortages mean the agency will only

be able to support six million people this winter, leaving millions more without help.

UNICEF noted that Afghanistan remains the second-largest humanitarian crisis in the world, with more than half the population in need of aid. While conflict has subsided, the drivers of need have shifted toward economic hardship and climate-induced shocks, compounded by significant operational barriers for aid organizations.

As Afghans face another winter of struggle, the international community's ability to sustain critical aid programs is being stretched thin, raising concerns about the nation's long-term recovery prospects.







**KARACHI:** A view of traffic jams on Shah Rah-e-Faisal due to strike by Shiite organizations against closure of roads in Kurram.

## PM directs action against human traffickers

### E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday directed the authorities concerned to take strict punitive action within a week against culprits involved in human trafficking.

The prime minister chaired a review meeting regarding the prevention of human trafficking in the country, a PM office press release said. During the meeting, the report of the committee formed under the chairmanship of Mushatq Sukhera was presented in view of the migrant's boat capsizing incident occurred near Greece in December 2024.

The PM extended his gratitude to Mushatq Sukhera for compiling a comprehensive report on the matter. He also directed to make the prosecution process more effective against people involved in human trafficking. "Why disciplinary action has not been taken against government officials who facilitate people involved in human trafficking?", the Prime Minister queried.

The PM directed to make visa checks and other regulations effective for all those going abroad. "The Government of Pakistan is committed to the complete elimination of human trafficking from the country," he added. The Prime Minister also issued instructions to form a committee headed by the Interior Minister to find a sustainable solution to end human trafficking.

In the meeting, the Prime Minister was briefed regarding the measures taken against human trafficking in the country, whereas a briefing was also given on the identification of the Pakistanis in the December 2024 migrant boat accident near Greece and the progress of repatriation of their remains. Federal Ministers Ahad Khan Cheema, Attaullah Tarar, Special Assistant Tariq Fatemi and senior officers of related institutions participated in the meeting.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif taking notice of complaints by the domestic consumers regarding shortage of gas supply, directed to ensure provision of uninterrupted supply to the consumers during winter season.

Chairing a meeting held here to review the situation of gas supply across the country, the prime minister directed to permanently resolve the issue by bringing

reforms in the system structure. "Providing gas to domestic consumers is the government's top priority", the prime minister said.

During the briefing, it was informed that there was a surplus of RLNG (Regasified Liquefied Natural Gas) in the system, leading to improvements in gas load management compared to last year. The meeting was told that the duration of gas load shedding this year was shorter than last year.

Gas is being provided to domestic consumers from 5 AM to 10 PM, while gas is also being provided to the power sector according to its demand, the meeting was further informed. Similarly, it was told that online dashboards for consumer complaints by SNGPL and SSGC were operational and the complaint resolution rate for SNGPL was 93%, while SSGC's rate was 79%. As per the briefing, all gas fields in the country were active.

The meeting was attended by Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Ahmad Khan Cheema, Federal Minister for Petroleum Dr. Musadik Malik, the Prime Minister's Coordinator Rana Ihsan Afzal, and other relevant senior government officials.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also said that Benazir Bhutto Shaheed was a champion of democracy and a staunch supporter of the power of dialogue and reconciliation in the political process.

The prime minister, in his message on the 17th anniversary of her martyrdom, said that Benazir Bhutto Shaheed remained an icon of courage and resilience. "A champion of democracy, and a staunch advocate of the power of dialogue and reconciliation in the political process, Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto remains an icon of courage and resilience," he wrote on his X timeline.

He said that the Charter of Democracy, signed between Benazir Bhutto and Mian Nawaz Sharif, stood as a testament to her enduring legacy. Prime Minister Shehbaz offered his deepest respect to Benazir Bhutto Shaheed's family, especially President Asif Ali Zardari and Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, and to her followers, who were proudly carrying forward her vision and advancing her ideals.

## Israel strikes Syria-Lebanon border

JERUSALEM (AFP): The Israeli military reported it conducted air strikes on Friday targeting "infrastructure" on the Syrian-Lebanese border near the village of Janta, which it said was used to smuggle weapons to the armed group Hezbollah.

"Earlier today, the IAF (Israeli air force) struck infrastructure that was used to smuggle weapons via Syria to the Hezbollah terrorist organization in Lebanon at the Janta crossing on the Syrian-Lebanese border," the military said in a statement. It did not specify whether the strikes were on the Syrian or Lebanese side, but they came a day after Lebanon's army accused Israel of "violation of the ceasefire agreement by attacking Lebanese sovereignty and destroying southern towns and villages."

There is no official crossing point near Janta but the area is known for illegal crossings. The UN peacekeeping force in southern Lebanon, UNIFIL, has also expressed concern over "continuing destruction" caused by Israeli forces in south Lebanon.

The Israeli military said Friday's strikes were aimed at preventing weapons falling into the hands of Hezbollah, with whom it fought a land and air war for more than a year until a ceasefire was agreed upon last month. "These strikes are an additional part of the IDF's (Israeli military's) effort to target weapons smuggling operations from Syria into Lebanon, and prevent Hezbollah from re-establishing weapons smuggling routes," the military said. "The IDF will continue to act to remove any threat to the state of Israel in accordance with the understandings in the ceasefire agreement." The truce went into effect on November 27, about two months after Israel stepped up its bombing campaign and later sent troops into Lebanon following nearly a year of exchanges of cross-border fire initiated by Hezbollah over the war in Gaza.

## 70 killed after boat capsizes

MADRID: At least 70 people, including 25 Malians, died after a boat heading from West Africa to Spain's Canary Islands capsized off Morocco, Malian authorities have said. The makeshift boat was carrying about 80 people when it capsized on December 19; only 11 people survived, the Ministry of Malians Abroad said in a statement on Thursday, after collecting information to reconstruct the incident. A crisis unit has been set up to monitor the situation, it added.

Several of the Malian victims are from the Kayes region in the west of the country, according to Doulaye Keita, adviser to the ministry, in a statement to The Associated Press news agency on Friday. "Among the 25 Malians dead, there are 8 Malians from my commune," Mamadou Siby, the mayor of the commune of Marena in the Kayes region, told AP.

"These dead young men left my commune seven months ago to work in the construction industry in Mauritania. Unfortunately, they were in contact with their friends in Europe and America, who encouraged them to come to these countries, and in most cases, they took the perilous journey without even informing their families back home," — Aljazeera

# India announces state funeral for Manmohan Singh

NEW DELHI (AFP): India announced seven days of state mourning on Friday after the death of former prime minister Manmohan Singh, one of the architects of the country's economic liberalisation in the early 1990s.

Singh, who held office from 2004 to 2014, died at the age of 92 late on Thursday evening at a hospital in New Delhi. He will also be accorded a state funeral. "As a mark of respect for the departed dignitary, it has been decided that seven days of state mourning will be observed throughout India," the Indian government said in a statement on Friday, with mourning running until January 1.

"It has also been decided that the state funeral will be accorded to late Dr. Manmohan Singh," it said, with the national flag fluttering at half-mast on official buildings across the country. India's cricket team battling hosts Australia in the fourth Test took to the ground in Melbourne on Friday with black armbands to show respect for Singh.

The official date for the state funeral was not announced immediately but a senior member of the Congress party suggested it would be held on Saturday. Prime Minister

Narendra Modi said India "mourns the loss of one of its most distinguished leaders", while newspapers hailed his legacy. "Man who liberated India's dreams," The Times of India front page read. "He opened India to the world," The Indian Express headline ran.

The former premier was an understated technocrat who was hailed for overseeing an economic boom in Asia's fourth-largest economy in his first term. However, Singh's second stint ended with a series of major corruption scandals, slowing growth, and high inflation.

Singh's unpopularity in his second term, and lacklustre leadership by Nehru-Gandhi scion Rahul Gandhi, the current opposition leader in the lower house, led to Modi's first landslide victory in 2014. Born in 1932 in the mud-house village of Gah, in what is now Pakistan, Singh studied economics to find a way to eradicate poverty in the vast nation and never held an elected post before taking the nation's highest office.

He won scholarships to attend both Cambridge, where he obtained a first in economics, and Oxford, where he completed his doctorate. Singh



worked in a string of senior civil service posts, served as a central bank governor and also held various jobs with global agencies such as the United Nations.

He was tapped in 1991 by then Congress prime minister P.V. Narasimha Rao to reel India back from the worst financial crisis in its modern history. Singh steered the economy through a period of nine percent growth in his first term, lending India the international clout it had long sought. He also sealed a landmark nuclear deal with the United States that he said would help India meet its growing energy needs.

## Israeli troops burn Gaza hospital

GAZA (AP): Israeli troops stormed one of the last hospitals operating in the northernmost part of Gaza on Friday, forcing many of the staff and patients out of the facility, the territory's health ministry said.

The Kamal Adwan Hospital has been hit multiple times over the past three months by Israeli troops waging an offensive against Hamas fighters in surrounding neighborhoods, according to staff. The ministry said a strike on the hospital a day earlier killed five medical staff. Israel's military said it was conducting operations against Hamas infrastructure and fighters in the area of the hospital, without providing details. It repeated claims that Hamas fighters were operating inside Kamal Adwan, though it provided no evidence.

Hospital officials have denied the accusations. The Health Ministry said troops forced medical personnel and patients to assemble in the hospital yard and remove their clothes amid the winter temperatures. They were led out of the hospital, some to an unknown location, while some patients were sent to the nearby Indonesian hospital, which was knocked out of operation after an Israel raid earlier this week. The ministry said troops set fires in several parts of Kamal Adwan, including the hospital's lab and surgery department. It said 25 patients and 60 health workers remained in the hospital out of 75 patients and 180 staff who had been there. The ministry's account could not be independently confirmed, and attempts to reach hospital staff were unsuccessful.

"Fire is ablaze everywhere in the hospital," an unidentified member of the staff said in an audio message from the hospital posted on the social media accounts of its director Hossam Abu Safiya. The staffer said some evacuated patients had been unhooked from oxygen. "There are currently patients who could die at any moment," she said. In raids, Israeli troops frequently carry out mass detentions, stripping men down to their underwear for questioning in what the military says is a security measure as they search for Hamas fighters. Although the AP doesn't have access to Kamal Adwan, armed Hamas security men in civilian clothes have been seen in other hospitals in Gaza, controlling access to certain areas or the distribution of supplies.

Since October, Israel's offensive has virtually sealed off the north Gaza

areas of Jabaliya, Beit Hanoun and Beit Lahiya and levelled large parts of the districts. Tens of thousands of Palestinians were forced out, but thousands are believed to remain in the area, where Kamal Adwan and two other hospitals are located. Troops raided Kamal Adwan earlier in October, and on Tuesday troops stormed and evacuated the nearby Indonesian Hospital. The area has been cut off from food and other aid for months, raising fears of famine. The UN says Israeli troops had only allowed four humanitarian deliveries to the area from Dec. 1 to Dec. 23.

The Israeli rights groups Physicians for Human Rights-Israel earlier this week petitioned Israel's High Court of Justice seeking a halt to military attacks on Kamal Adwan. It warned that forcibly evacuating the hospital would "abandon thousands of residents in northern Gaza." Before the latest deaths Thursday, the group documented five other staffers killed by Israeli fire since October. Israel's nearly 15-month-old campaign of bombardment and offensives in Gaza have devastated the territory's health sector. A year ago, it carried out a wave of raids on hospitals in northern Gaza, including Kamal Adwan, Indonesian and nearby Al-Awda Hospital, saying they served bases for Hamas, though it presented little evidence.

Israel's campaign has killed more than 45,400 Palestinians, more than half of them women and children, and wounded more than 108,000 others, according to the Health Ministry. Its count does not distinguish between civilians and combatants. More than 90 percent of Gaza's 2.3 million Palestinians have been driven from their homes, most of them now sheltering in sprawling, squalid tent camps in south and central Gaza. Israel launched its campaign vowing to destroy Hamas after the group's Oct. 7, 2023, attack on southern Israel in which militants killed around 1,200 people and abducted some 250 others. Around 100 Israelis remain captive in Gaza, around a third of whom are believed to be dead.

Meanwhile, a Palestinian health-care worker has died due to "extreme" weather conditions, according to a statement by the enclave's Ministry of Health, as severe cold compounds the hardship faced by people displaced by Israel's relentless attacks. The body of Al-Hakim Ahmed al-Zaharneh, who worked at the European Gaza

Hospital, was found inside his tent in al-Mawasi area, west of the city of Khan Younis, southern Gaza, the ministry said on Friday.

"This incident comes in light of the difficult humanitarian conditions that displaced citizens are experiencing, as the suffering of Gaza residents increases due to low temperatures and the lack of heating means in tents," the ministry said. The ministry said earlier that four Palestinian babies have died in tents in recent days amid the cold weather and widespread malnutrition.

Al Jazeera's Hani Mahmoud, reporting from Deir el-Balah in central Gaza, said that the number of casualties in vulnerable groups is increasing due to worsening weather conditions. "For 14 months now, people here have been lacking basic necessities to help them survive these difficult conditions – even in summer," he said. "Now in winter, the temperature has dropped very low, [and] people in tent camps feel the cold as being [colder] than the actual levels."

He said that mothers often lack the strength or ability to breastfeed as they are malnourished and unwell. "The conditions are worse for vulnerable groups like babies and, in the absence of [humanitarian aid], it is natural that deaths will happen." The vast majority of the Gaza Strip's 2.4 million residents have been displaced at least once since war broke out with the Palestinian group Hamas on October 7, 2023, with many people living in tents that offer little protection from the cold, rain and flooding.

The United Nations and other organisations have repeatedly decried the worsening humanitarian conditions in Gaza, as Israeli attacks and blockades severely cut access to food, water, medicine and other supplies. A leading United States government organisation monitoring food crises around the world withdrew a new report this week warning of imminent famine in north Gaza under what it called Israel's "near-total blockade," after the US asked for its retraction. US officials told The Associated Press. The move follows public criticism of the report from the US ambassador to Israel. The report by the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) had warned that a "famine scenario" was unfolding in northern Gaza where Israel launched a renewed offensive in early October.

## Houthis claim attacks on Israel

SANAA (AFP): Yemen's Houthis claimed new attacks against Israel on Friday, after Israeli air strikes hit rebel-held Sanaa's international airport and other targets in Yemen.

The Israeli strikes on Thursday landed as the head of the UN's World Health Organization said he and his team were preparing to fly out from Yemen's Houthi rebel-held capital, injuring a UN crew member.

Hours later on Friday, the Iran-backed Houthis said they fired a missile at Ben Gurion Airport outside Tel Aviv and launched drones at the city as well as a ship in the Arabian Sea. Israel's military had earlier on Friday reported a missile launched from Yemen had been intercepted "before crossing into Israeli territory." Sirens sounded because of possible falling debris after the interception, it said.

Yemen's Houthis have stepped up their attacks against Israel since late November when a ceasefire took effect between Israel and another Iran-backed group, Lebanon's Hezbollah. Israeli "aggression will only increase the determination and resolve of the great Yemeni people to continue supporting the Palestinian people," a Houthi statement on Friday said.

Despite the damage, flights from Sanaa airport resumed at 10:00 am (0700 GMT) on Friday, Houthi Deputy Transport Minister Yahya Al-Sayani said. "The airport tower has been directly hit in addition to the departure lounge and airport navigation equipment. The attack resulted in four dead until now and around 20 wounded from staff, airport and passengers," Sayani said.

Israel's military did not immediately respond to a request for comment on whether they knew at the time that WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus was there. The strikes left

the top of the control tower a bombed-out shell and large windows in the airport building were shattered, with glass littering the ground.

Israel's attack came a day after the rebels claimed the firing of a missile and two drones at Israel. The strikes against what Israel's military called rebel "military targets" marked the second time since December 19 that Israel has hit targets in Yemen after rebel missile fire toward Israel.

In his latest warning to the Houthis, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel would "continue until the job is done." "We are determined to cut this branch of terrorism from the Iranian axis of evil," he said in a video statement. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres denounced the escalation in hostilities and said bombing transportation infrastructure threatened humanitarian operations in Yemen, where 80 percent of the population is dependent on aid.

Tedros was in Yemen to seek the release of United Nations staff detained for months by the Houthis, and to assess the humanitarian situation. On Friday he said that a member of the UN's Humanitarian Air Service "who was injured yesterday due to the bombardment underwent successful surgery and is now in stable condition."

A witness told AFP that raids also targeted the adjacent Al-Dailami air base. Strikes also targeted a power station in Hodeida, on the rebel-held coast, a witness and Al-Masirah TV said. Following rebel attacks against Israel this year, Israeli strikes had twice before hit Hodeida, a major entry point for humanitarian aid to the country ravaged for years by its own war.

On December 19, after the rebels fired a missile toward Israel and badly damaged a school, Israel for the first time struck targets in Sanaa. Houthi

media said those strikes killed nine people. In the latest attacks, the Israeli military said its "fighter jets conducted intelligence-based strikes" on Houthi "military targets."

The targets included "military infrastructure" at the airport and power stations in Sanaa and Hodeida, as well as other facilities at Hodeida, Salif and Ras Kanatib ports, an Israeli statement said. Houthi rebels used the targets "to smuggle Iranian weapons into the region and for the entry of senior Iranian officials," the statement said. Similar strikes in September followed a rebel claim to have targeted Ben Gurion Airport. At that time Israel also said it targeted sites used to "transfer Iranian weaponry."

Iran's foreign ministry condemned the latest Israeli strikes as a "clear violation of international peace and security." On December 21, Israel's military and emergency services said a projectile fired from Yemen wounded 16 people in Tel Aviv. The Houthis have repeatedly fired missiles and drones at Israel since the Gaza war began in October last year, claiming solidarity with the Palestinians. They have similarly fired drones and missiles against commercial shipping in surrounding waters vital to world trade, prompting reprisal strikes against Houthi targets by the United States and sometimes Britain.

In July, a Houthi drone attack on Tel Aviv killed an Israeli civilian, prompting the first Israeli retaliation on Hodeida. The Houthis control large parts of Yemen after seizing Sanaa and ousting the internationally recognized government in September 2014. A Saudi-led coalition in March 2015 began a military campaign against the Houthis that the Yemen Data Project, an independent tracker, said involved more than 25,000 air raids.