

PM to visit Saudi Arabia
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif is scheduled to pay a two-day visit to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on December 3-4, 2024 to participate in the "One Water Summit." A joint initiative of Saudi Arabia, France, Kazakhstan, and the World Bank, the Summit aims to promote global cooperation, according to a curtain raiser issued by the Foreign Office.

Mortar blast kills 3 students
F.P. Report

BANNU: At least three children of a local religious seminary were killed when a dumped mortar shell exploded in Janikhel area of Bannu on Monday. Local police said three children namely, Zeeshan and Wahab, sons of Ubaid Ullah and Alamzeb, son of Jahangir, residents of Seen Tanga were playing with a live mortar shell when it exploded with a big bang.



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

PHC grants bail to Opp leader in NA

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has granted bail to Omar Ayub, the Opposition Leader in the National Assembly, and Faisal Amin Gandapur, the brother of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, and ordered that neither of the two leaders be arrested until December 21.

The decision was made during a hearing of their bail applications, which was presided over by Justice Shakeel Ahmed. During the hearing, the lawyer representing the petitioners argued that Omar Ayub, as an elected member of the National Assembly and an opposition leader, had been subjected to multiple cases in Islamabad.

Justice Shakeel Ahmed responded by emphasizing the importance of resolving the country's issues through dialogue in the parliament, stating, "This country is safe, and we are the first priority. The problems should be solved by sitting in the parliament." Justice Ahmed also underscored the collective responsibility of both the opposition and the government in maintaining peace, saying, "When an unpleasant incident occurs, this country suffers."

If a security person is injured, he is also a son of this country." He urged the opposition leader, Omar Ayub, to recognize the

Imran arrested in 6 additional cases, remand extended

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Imran Khan, the founding chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and former Prime Minister of Pakistan, has been arrested in six more cases, according to authorities. These arrests occurred on September 28, October 4, and October 5.

Prosecutor Amin Minhas confirmed that Khan will be taken on a seven-day physical remand on Monday for the six cases. The remand in the case registered by the New Town police station has already been completed, and the remand in the remaining cases will be processed today. Currently held in Adiala Jail, Khan's health is reported to be stable. Jail sources indicate that there is no truth to the rumors claiming that the former prime minister has been transferred from Adiala Jail. Imran Khan remains in his designated cell, where all necessary facilities are being provided in accordance with jail regulations.

added responsibility of his position and work with the government to resolve the nation's issues. The court granted transit bail to the two leaders, which will remain in effect until December 21, providing them protection from arrest during this period. Following the court's decision, Omar Ayub spoke to the media outside the Peshawar High Court, criticizing the government and the cases filed against him. He revealed that multiple FIRs (First Information Reports) had been registered against him, including three cases related to motorcycle theft. Ayub, who is also a member of the Judicial Commission, remarked, "I am the opposition leader, and yet I am being targeted with cases

like motorcycle theft." Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar said that party founder Imran Khan expressed condolence over the martyrdom of Rangers and workers during the protest call in Islamabad.

He was speaking to media outside Adiala Jail on Monday. "Imran Khan strongly condemned the loss of lives during the protest and prayed for all the departed souls," said Barrister Gohar. He said Imran Khan urged all the party leaders to remain united. "Imran Khan reposed his trust on the entire leadership of PTI," said the PTI chairman. He added that the party founder would announce the next strategy in few days.

Kundi briefs Bilawal about law and order

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Governor Faisal Karim Kundi on Monday briefed the Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari about the law and order situation in the province.

A meeting held here at Zardari House which was attended by PPP's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa President Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha and General Secretary Shazi Khan. The situation of law and order in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was a key topic of conversation. Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha and Shazi Khan also highlighted issues related to the federal government's approach in the province.

Governor Faisal Karim Kundi briefed Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari about the grand Jirga held at the Commissioner House in Kohat, which focused on peacekeeping efforts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The Governor also shared details of a meeting with political parties in Kurram regarding the establishment of peace. Additionally, Governor Kundi briefed the PPP chairman about an upcoming All Parties Conference (APC) scheduled for December 5 in Peshawar, which will address terrorism and the unfair distribution of resources in the province.

Meanwhile, Coordination Committee met at Bilawal House under the Chairmanship of Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, to coordinate and prioritise responses to the ongoing political challenges. Members recounted their ongoing and unresolved issues from Punjab, South Punjab, Balochistan, Sindh as well as political, policy and development challenges at the federal level.

Policy issues such as flood rehabilitation, water management controversies, challenges to the agricultural and digital economy, public interest legislation were discussed in detail. On reservations with the federal government, lack of timely consultation on political, policy and legislative matters, inability to implement commitments were identified as key stumbling blocks to be addressed. Members also noted the growing surge in terrorism in the country and the absence of a new consensus to combat the new challenges resulting from new ground realities.

PM: Protests caused huge losses to nation

Cabinet approves National Prevention of Violent Extremism Policy 2024

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Cabinet, on the recommendation of the Interior Ministry, approved the National Prevention of Violent Extremism Policy 2024 on Monday. The cabinet also approved in principle the proposal of the interior ministry with respect to the establishment of Islamabad Central Business District Development Authority.

The meeting, on the recommendation of commerce ministry, authorized to file review petition against the Supreme Court of Pakistan's decision of lifting ban on the export of Monosodium glutamate (Ajinomoto).

The decision was taken in the light of the report of the expert's special committee that was formed to monitor the impacts of Monosodium glutamate on human health. The report had termed the Monosodium glutamate safe for human health. The committee was comprised of representatives from Pakistan Scientific and Industrial Research, National Agriculture Research Center, National University of Sciences and Technology, Institute of Food and Nutritional Sciences, Federal Ministry of National Food Safety and Research, Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority and Board of Investment.

The meeting of the federal cabinet was held here under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. The cabinet, on the proposal of ministry of education and professional training also gave a go ahead to the renewal of the Memoranda of Understands with respect to University of Cambridge, Saint Antony's College University of Oxford, University of Jordan, Pecking University China, University of Hydal Berg, and Pakistan Chairs in Germany.

Furthermore, the cabinet, on the recommendation of ministry of education and professional training approved nomination of Dr Habib ur Rehman and Dr Kamran Ansari as subject experts in the Board of Governors of University of Engineering and Technology (UET) Lahore and the nomination of Dr Mumtaz Muhammad Shah and Dr Muhammad Ahmed Farooqui as subject experts in Board of Governors of Center of Excellence in Mineralogy, University of Balochistan Quetta.

The federal cabinet, on the proposal of ministry of law and justice and in line with Sindh High Court orders approved the amendment in the jurisdiction of special courts. On the recommendation of ministry of law and justice and in line with Balochistan High Court orders, the cabinet also approved amendments in the jurisdiction of special courts (customs, taxation and anti smuggling) Quetta and Khuzdar.

Similarly, on proposals of ministry of law and justice and in line with orders of Peshawar High Court, Lahore High Court, Islamabad High Court, Sindh High Court, and Balochistan High Court, the cabinet authorized the additional session judges and other relevant courts to hear the cases under lawyers welfare and protection act 2023. Earlier, speaking on the occasion, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif appreciated his economic teams' performance saying that the country's economy was on track to progress amid stringent clamp down on smuggling, plummeting inflation and doubled revenue collection that helped improve the eroding economy.

"Today the inflation rate is at 70 months' lowest level of 4.9 per cent [which was at 7.2 per cent in October 2024] which is beyond imagination and due to the team work and blessings of the Almighty," he said while addressing the federal cabinet meeting. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said the sentiment on ground was positive as inflation had further declined and the government would have to proceed towards growth with a focused approach to improve gross domestic product (GDP) ratio, exports, industry, employment and special economic zones (SEZs).

He said all these indicators were critical as inflation was the only tool that aggravates poverty and diminishes poor man's purchasing power parity. "Drop in inflation will incur propitious results as the State Bank after its meeting would reduce policy rate which is its prerogative," the prime minister said.

Shehbaz reiterated that the protests held previously caused huge economic and property losses to the nation. "Pakistan Stock Exchange also crashed from its highest trading level but after de-escalation of the situation at D-Chowk it bounced back and mitigated the previous losses," he said. He also noted that the government had managed

to maintain more revenue collection than the previous year. He noted that enforcement was the only tool in the short term to ensure revenue collection.

He mentioned that earlier due to soaring inflation, he guardedly allowed 0.79 million tonnes of Sugar export that not only helped in stabilizing the commodity prices, but rather resulted in further decline in its prices. "It will provide the country an opportunity to earn half a billion dollars from Sugar exports," he added. The prime minister underlined that smuggling had gone zero due to Pakistan Army's complete enforcement and support as previously there were multiple law enforcement agencies on the borders but the current stringent regime remained an uphill task for them.

The FBR should deploy competent enforcement teams to achieve its revenue collection targets as that was how nations were built," he added. The prime minister also congratulated, Minister for Aviation, Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif and his team for achieving landmark success as the European aviation regulator lifted the ban on Pakistan International Airlines flights to Europe after more than four years.

PM Shehbaz regretted that the former Aviation Minister's irresponsible statement brought embarrassment and bad name to the country that caste negative impact on the national economy. He also praised former Aviation Minister, Khawaja Saad Rafique and his team for making efforts in the previous regime for this cause.

Shehbaz satisfied over pace of Pakistan-Saudi bilateral projects, cooperation: Prime Minister, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif expressed his satisfaction with the progress in cooperation and investment projects between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, hailing the longstanding friendship between the two nations. Chairing a review meeting, the prime minister highlighted that Pakistan's collaboration with Saudi Arabia continued to grow across various sectors, underscoring the strategic partnership between the two countries. "Saudi Arabia has been a reliable partner in Pakistan's challenging times, and we are committed to deepening this cooperation," Prime Minister Shehbaz said.

CJP for ensuring smooth administration of justice

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The President of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA), Mian Muhammad Rauf Atta, accompanied by the General Secretary, Salman Mansoor, met with the Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP), Justice Yahya Afridi, here at the Supreme Court on Monday to discuss challenges faced by the legal fraternity in ensuring efficient dispensation of justice.

According to an official statement, the Chief Justice agreed to early fixation of all types of bail applications soon after the filing. Similarly, the Chief Justice also allowed the request of restoration of the chamber hearing of the cases with regard to interim applications and stay matters. The CJP indicated that throughout the week, judges nomi-

nated by the Supreme Court would be hearing the cases in chamber. Following the SCBA leadership's request, the Chief Justice agreed to increase the number of judges assigned to chamber appeals to further expedite the process.

The CJP, also acceded to the request of the SCBA that all applications requesting a video link would be entertained on the same day of the hearing of cases in the respective Registries. This initiative is aimed at facilitating lawyers, minimizing delays, and reducing the need for adjournments, particularly for those practicing in distant regions.

Regarding the timely provision of certified copies, the Chief Justice outlined that the system is being revamped in the digitization initiative underway to streamline opera-

tions and improve service delivery. In response to concerns about file tracking and accessibility, particularly for lawyers from remote areas, the CJP desired that all the Advocates of the Supreme Court should provide their designated emails and WhatsApp No's in the office so that the provisions of filing petitions directly online and issuance of certified copies and notices etc, be expedited.

The SCBA leadership expressed appreciation for these proactive measures and reaffirmed their support for initiatives that enhance the efficiency and accessibility of the justice system. The Chief Justice reiterated his commitment to addressing the challenges faced by the legal community and ensuring the smooth administration of justice.

'Brazilian-made shells used by PTI protesters'

F.P. Report

ATTOCK: Attock District Police Officer Ghias disclosed on Monday the PTI protesters used Brazilian made shells to launch violent attacks. They, the DPO mentioned, were also in constant communication with each other through a wireless system.

The DPO made these remarks while addressing a presser. He said the protesters also started firing at pickets and the police personnel had to arrest them while putting their lives on the line. He said the police tried to stop the crowd in Attock. During that episode, there were violent clashes which resulted in the arrest of many people. The police officer said the whole country was in panic mood after that uncalled for call by the PTI. Among 1,150 detainees, he said, 89 people did not have any kind of record in the country.

Grand jirga, KP CM discusses Kurram situation

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Members of the Grand Jirga constituted to address the Kurram issue called on the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur at the Chief Minister's House on Monday. The meeting focused on initiating formal negotiations and other relevant matters of the ongoing dispute in the Kurram district.

Advisor to Chief Minister on Information, Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif, was also present. Prominent members of the Jirga included former Federal Minister Pir Noor-

ul-Haq Qadri, former Senators Saleh Shah and Sajad Khan, former Federal Minister G.G. Gulab Jamal, former Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Engineer Shaukatullah, and Senator Abdul Raziq, among others. During the meeting, the Jirga members assured their full cooperation with the provincial government and expressed their commitment to resolving the issue through peaceful means. They lauded the Chief Minister's efforts in seeking a peaceful resolution through traditional jirga mechanisms.

The Grand Jirga is expected to visit Kurram in

the coming days to initiate dialogue with all concerned parties. Chief Minister Gandapur thanked the Jirga members for their support and assured them that the provincial government would provide all necessary assistance and resources to facilitate the negotiation process. He expressed hope that the Jirga's efforts would lead to a peaceful and lasting solution to the Kurram issue.

Meanwhile, following a renewed ceasefire between rival groups in Kurram district, the personnel of security forces and police have been deployed in restive areas to maintain peace.

KP Cabinet approves action plan for resolving Kurram issue

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The 18th meeting of the provincial cabinet held under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, on Monday focused on issues faced by Kurram district and approved a robust action plan aimed at restoring durable peace and stability in the strife ridden area.

The meeting, attended by members of the provincial cabinet, Chief Secretary, Additional Chief Secretaries, and concerned administrative secretaries, was briefed on the prevailing situation in Kurram, where during the recent unfortunate incidents about 133 precious lives have been lost and about 177 people injured. A Grand Jirga has been constituted to deescalate the volatile situation, ensure peace and resolve the crisis. The Jirga, comprising of respected local elders, will remain in the area until peace is completely restored. The provincial government underscored the importance of community involvement, calling on local elders to cooperate in identifying and isolating elements inciting sectarian

hatred and unrest.

The provincial cabinet decided to declare individuals spreading hatred as terrorists and take strict legal action against them. Such elements will be included in Schedule IV under the law. Additionally, bunkers in the area will be demolished, and heavy weapons in the possession of residents will be confiscated to curb violence.

"The local communities must stand united against divisive elements that threaten our peace and stability," remarked Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur. "The government remains resolute in its commitment to restoring harmony in the region." It was further decided that as many as 65 checkpoints will be established along key locations, particularly on the Kurram Highway, to ensure security. Similarly, a formal request has also been sent to the Federal Government for the deployment of FC platoons to strengthen the security.

The Provincial Cabinet approved a comprehensive relief package for the victims of violence in Kurram. Financial assistance will be provided to the families of the martyrs and

injured individuals, while compensation will be extended for properties damaged. A survey to assess the extent of damages is underway, and Rs. 380 million has already been released for this purpose. Additional funds will be provided if needed, the Cabinet further decided. All out efforts are being made to ensure the immediate and dignified return of all those families who have been displaced from their homes due to the conflict.

Similarly, the Cabinet decided to provide bulletproof and bombproof vehicles and other necessary equipment to the civil administration, CTD and law enforcement agencies in the merged districts, southern districts and Malakand, to enhance their capacity to counter violent conflicts. In response to the acute shortage of essential medicines in Kurram, the Provincial Cabinet directed for the immediate supply of medicines via helicopter.

The Cabinet also constituted a high-level monitoring committee, comprising the Provincial Law Minister, Advisor to CM for Information and relevant parliamen-

tarians to oversee the implementation of the action plan. This committee will ensure that all measures, from financial assistance to peacebuilding efforts, are being executed effectively and transparently. The Provincial Cabinet also approved a compensation package for Shuhada of the 26th November D-Chowk incident under which Rs 10 Million each will be provided to the bereaved families. Similarly, Rs 1 million will be provided to those seriously injured.

The cabinet also approved a compensation package of Rs 187.00 million to the families of Shuhada of security forces belonging to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa who embraced martyrdom during the terrorism related incidents. This package will be provided as token of acknowledgement to the family of the martyred officer(s) and soldier(s).

The cabinet further approved the creation of 10 posts of Judges for Peshawar High Court, Peshawar. It is pertinent to mention here that the President has increased the number of Judges of Peshawar High Court from 20 to 30. Accordingly, the Peshawar High Court requested for creation of

10 posts of additional Judges. The cabinet also approved the annual report 2023 of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Service Commission. It also approved recommendations of the commission with respect to producing quality human resource in the province including formulation of strategy for relaxing the criteria for recruitment under minority quota. The Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa lauded the performance of the commission and directed the Finance Department to resolve the financial needs of the commission on priority basis. It also approved the placement of annual report of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority for the Financial Year 2022-23 before the Provincial Assembly.

The cabinet also approved the appointment of Information Commissioners, Social & Judicial, under the Right to Information Commission Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The provincial cabinet also approved provision of additional funds (supplementary grant) for Purchase/installation of security equipment, jammers, communication system & CCTV

cameras in the prisons of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It also granted the status of "Authorize Entity" to the prison wood working industries for the direct sale of furniture/wood items to all government entities.

The cabinet further approved the absorption of 106 Khasadars of District Mohmand in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police. The cabinet approved the constitution of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sugarcane and Sugar Beet Control Board for the year 2024-25. It also approved names of the members of the Board of Directors of WSSC Abbottabad and Kohat. The Cabinet also gave its approval for the removal of members of Search and Nomination Council Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Health Foundation.

The cabinet accorded approval to the exemption to the extent of 1% in respect of Infrastructure Development Cess under section 6 of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Infrastructure Development Cess Act, 2022. The cabinet granted approval to the proposed amendments in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Biosphere Reserve and Conservancy Rules 2022.



CM Murad highlights Thar Coal as Pakistan's cheapest power source

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah stated that Thar Coal is the most affordable source of electricity generation in the country, however, due to transmission constraints, there are instances when the delivery of this inexpensive power is hindered, preventing the full potential of Thar Coal from being realised.

"Since 2019, 27000 GWh of electricity has been generated from Thar Coal Block-II at a significantly lower fuel price of Rs 4.8 per kWh, compared to Rs 19.5 per kWh for imported coal, which has resulted in a foreign exchange saving of approximately \$1.3 billion.

He said this on Monday while presiding over a 28th Thar Coal Energy Board meeting at CM House. The meeting was attended by Minister Energy Nasir Shah, MNA Shazia Marri, Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah, PSCM Agha Wasif, and Secretary Energy Musadik Malik. MD Thar Coal Tariq Shah. From the Federal government (through video link) Federal Finance Minister Mohammad Aurangzeb, Deputy Chairman Planning Commission, Federal Secretary Energy Fakhre Alam, and others attended the meeting.

Mr Shah said that Thar Coal represents the most economical source of electricity generation within the country, and it is also locally

sourced. "Despite its cost-effectiveness, the evacuation of power from Thar faces challenges due to transmission limitations," he pointed out and added that both federal and provincial governments are working in collaboration to improve the electricity evacuation infrastructure from Thar to mitigate overall electricity costs so that the nation can truly benefit from the local source.

The CM proudly said that Thar has successfully generated 2,640 MW of power, positioning it as the most affordable energy source in the country, thereby supplying electricity to over six million households. Mr Shah stated that since 2019, 27000 GWh of electricity has been generated alone from Thar Coal Block-II at a significantly lower fuel price of Rs 4.8 per kWh, compared to Rs 19.5 per kWh for imported coal, which has resulted in a foreign exchange saving of approximately \$1.3 billion.

The CM said that this achievement was a realisation of the dream of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, made possible under the guidance of President Asif Zardari.

Federal Secretary (Power Division) Fakhre Alam, replying to a question from the chief minister, said that the Prime Minister has issued directives for the conversion of the Jamshoro, Sahiwal, Port Qasim and Hub power plants on Thar Coal for imported coal substitution. He

further added that a study would be conducted before converting them on imported coal. At this, the CM said that once the railway line is laid, transportation of coal from Thar to upcountry would be easy and cheap. Railway Line from Thar Coal: During the presentation on the railway line, the Chief Minister was informed that the contract to lay the rail track from the Thar Coalfield in Islamabad to Chort, a distance of 105 km, has been awarded to the Frontier Works Organization (FWO). Earthwork is currently in progress, and sleepers have been procured. Procurement of rails and fastening materials has also begun.

Additionally, a 9 km rail track is being developed from Bin Qasim to the Lucky Power Plant and Coal Unloading Facility for M/s Lucky Electric Power Company at Port Qasim.

The Chief Minister was told that a total of 756.10 acres of land has been identified for the project, of which 36 acres are private land that still needs to be acquired. At this, the Chief Minister directed Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah to instruct the Commissioner of Mirpurkhas Division to proceed with the land acquisition. In Tharparkar, 242.12 acres of private land are being acquired, for which Rs 60.8 million has been allocated to the Commissioner of Mirpurkhas, as stated by the Chief Secretary.

The board was informed

that a railway line is expected to be completed by December 2025, with the establishment of a special purpose vehicle (SPV). Furthermore, site clearance work is already in full swing.

The board also approved the recommendations for the Indexed/Adjusted Tariff Order concerning the motions for determining the indexations/adjustments of the tariff for the period from October 2022 to March 2024, submitted by the Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SECMC) for Phase II of the mine at Block II in the Thar Coalfield.

Additionally, the Thar Coal Board approved the extension of the Thar Coal Tariff Determination Committee members, Board directors Dr Fahad Irfan Siddiqui and Ammar Habib Khan, until August 2025.

The CEO of SECMC reported to the meeting that Chinese lenders are willing to support the expansion of the Block-2 mine, increasing its capacity from the current 7.6 million tons per annum (mtpa) to 11.2 mtpa. He stated that a financial close is expected to be achieved by the first quarter of 2025. The expansion will be financed locally, and a term sheet has already been signed with Meezan Bank to arrange the necessary funding. The Federal Finance Minister, the Chief Minister of Sindh, and the State Bank of Pakistan have all played crucial roles in this process.



KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah presides over the 28th meeting of the Thar Coal Energy Board at the CM House.

Committee formed to prob disinformation: Danyal

KARACHI (APP): The Parliamentary Secretary of Information and Broadcasting Barrister Danyal Chaudhry on Monday said that a Committee on Disinformation had been formed to probe into issues related to spreading disinformation.

He said that the Committee would take strict action against those, who were in forefront of spreading disinformation specially belonging to parliamentary issues. While talking to media persons, during his visit to Sindh Assembly leading a delegation of Young Parliamentarians Forum (YPF) including its President MNA Syeda Nausheen Iftikhar and General Secretary MNA Nawabzada Jamal Khan Raisani, he said that the Committee had power to pronounce 10 years sentence. Danyal Chaudhry said that those, who were involved directly or indirectly in attempts to sabotage Parliament, sovereignty of the country, and its stability would be made accountable.

Meanwhile, YPF President Syeda Nausheen Iftikhar said that their purpose of visiting Karachi was to develop coordination with provinces and form YPF at provincial levels. She said that YPF was a chapter in which Speaker of National Assembly had keen interest to take along the provinces and our parliamentarians. The age limit for YPF was 44 and there were 64 Young Parliamentarians in the National Assembly. Nausheen said that the present era was of misinformation and disinformation and its impacts could be seen at national level whether those were processions or protests in which properties of the country were damaged. She said that their focus was on youth engagement, their own skill development, public dealing, and social media to cope with the vibe set against institutions. She was of the view that the formation of YPF in the provinces would also deal with the attempts of misleading the nation.

Earlier, upon their arrival, they were received by the Secretary of Sindh Assembly G.M. Umar Farooq.

Later, the delegation called on the Speaker Sindh Assembly Syed Awaiz Qadir Shah and visited various parts of the historic Sindh Assembly building. In the meeting, Syeda Nausheen Iftikhar, engaged in productive discussions with the Speaker Syed Awaiz Qadir Shah and members of the Sindh Assembly, according to a PA communique. The meeting set the stage for the official establishment of the YPF Sindh chapter, an initiative aimed at empowering young lawmakers and encouraging collaboration on social and legislative issues.

The YPF delegation, comprising board members, legislators, and secretariat members from the National Assembly included Jamal Khan Raisani (General Secretary YPF), Muhammad Iqbal Khan (Information Secretary YPF), Barrister Aqeel Malik, Danyal Chaudhary, Raja Osama Sarwar, Saad Waseem Sheikh, Kiran Imran Dar, Akhtar Bibi, Shaista Khan, Syed Ali Qasim Gillani, Ali Jan Mazari, Salahuddin Junejo, Pir Ameer Ali Shah Jeelani, Zulfiqar Sattar Bachani, Muhammad Miqdad Ali Khan, Muhammad Saad Ullah, Usman Ali, and key officers from the National Assembly Secretariat, including Syed Shamoon Hashmi, Muhammad Mushtaq, and Zafar Zultani.

The Sindh Assembly delegation, led by Speaker Syed Awaiz Qadir Shah, featured a cross-section of leadership, including Ministers Muhammad Ali Malkani, Shahid Salam Thaheem, and Riaz Shah Sheerazi; Opposition Leader Ali Khurshidi; and MPAs Yusuf Baloch, Khurram Karim Soomro, Sher Muhammad Mugheri, Nida Khuuro, Mahkdoom Fakhar Zaman, Taimoor Talpur, Sadia Javed, Najam Mirza, Shazia Karim Singhar, and Muhammad Awaiz. Advisor to the Chief Minister Sindh Babul Khan Bhayo and former MNA Ahsan Khan

Mazari along with Secretary G.M. Umar Farooq and DG Irfan Ahmed Memon were present.

The meeting focused the critical role young legislators must play in addressing the nation's challenges. President YPF stressed the importance of eradicating political polarization and promoting unity among the youth. She declared that YPF Pakistan would ensure seamless collaboration between its federal and provincial chapters, working collectively to empower nationalism and strengthen democratic values.

Both President Nosheen Iftikhar and Speaker Syed Awaiz Qadir Shah emphasized the need to tackle misinformation and disinformation, which have emerged as significant threats to governance and democracy. It was agreed to jointly address these issues through education, legislation, and awareness campaigns. The discussions also charted a roadmap for mutual collaboration on pressing social challenges, including human rights, women's rights, and youth-related issues. Both the YPF Pakistan and YPF Sindh chapters, with the support of the Sindh Assembly, pledged to drive legislative efforts that promote equality, inclusion, and opportunity.

President Iftikhar proposed holding regular sessions and capacity-building seminars to equip legislators with the tools to navigate these complex issues. Syed Awaiz Qadir Shah assured the delegation that the YPF Sindh chapter would reflect the province's diversity, with an impartial cabinet representing all parliamentary parties. 'The youth are the future of Pakistan,' Speaker said. 'It is their responsibility to lead with integrity, uphold democratic norms, and work tirelessly for a united and prosperous country.' Reflecting on the words of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, he added, 'Democracy is the best revenge,' encouraging young leaders to defend democratic values with determination.

Speakers urge for collaborative efforts to address water woes in Karachi

F.P. Report

KARACHI : "Pakistan's largest metropolitan city, Karachi, is grappling with water scarcity due to a lack of appropriate preventive policies and actions. The city's water supply relies on surface water and groundwater sources; however, the supply is insufficient, and the water quality falls short of acceptable standards. These issues were highlighted by speakers during a workshop titled Strengthening City-Wide Partnership to Promote Collective Action for Water Stewardship (SCWP), held at a local hotel in Karachi. The session identified and discussed local water-related challenges.

The event brought together a diverse group of stakeholders, including representatives from various government departments such as the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) and the Karachi Water and Sewerage Corporation (KWS&C). It also included religious scholars from different sects, such as Jamia Darul Uloom, representatives from civil society, academia and researchers from NED University, and representatives from private sector businesses. The session aimed to establish a workable Collective

Action Platform for addressing water related issues.

Dr. Conor Linstead, Freshwater Specialist at WWF-UK, emphasized the significant potential benefits of establishing a platform to foster collaboration among diverse stakeholders. He highlighted that such a platform could serve as a cornerstone for promoting effective water stewardship while addressing localized water challenges through a collective action approach. According to Dr. Linstead, bringing together various stakeholders ranging from policymakers, industries, and local communities to environmental experts could create an avenue for sharing knowledge, resources, and strategies aimed at sustainable water management. By uniting efforts under a common framework, this initiative could drive innovative solutions, enhance resilience to water-related issues, and contribute to the equitable and efficient use of water resources, ultimately supporting both environmental conservation and socio-economic development.

Aftab Chandio, Chief Engineer Sewerage, Karachi Water and Sewerage Corporation (KW&SC), elaborated on the corporation's strategic initiatives aimed at transforming Karachi's water infrastructure. Among

the highlighted projects were the rehabilitation of the Hub Canal and the much-anticipated K-IV project, both of which are pivotal to addressing the city's growing water needs. Chandio underscored the importance of these endeavors in enhancing KW&SC capacity to supply water to its residents of Karachi, with the potential to significantly increase the city's current surface water availability, possibly doubling the existing supply.

In order to successfully establish a collective action platform for water stewardship, WWF-Pakistan aims to develop a Multi Stakeholder Platform (MSP) where all the relevant stakeholders will be engaged in a timely and effective manner. The first step for the formation of an MSP is to develop a Stakeholder Engagement Strategy (SES) that will help in recognizing the need for collective action platform in Karachi. As an outcome of the session, four major working groups were identified including government, academia, civil society organizations and the private sector. The roles and responsibilities of the working groups were identified and initiatives including identifying and replicating Nature Based Solutions (NbS), scaling up water conservation, policy reforms etc were discussed.

Suspect arrested for violence against women

LAHORE (APP): Police have arrested an accused involved in violence against women here in the area of Gujranwala on Monday.

According to the details, a neighbour from Gujranwala called the 15 emergency helpline to report the incident. The caller said that cries and sounds of beatings could be heard daily from the house across the street. The perpetrator regularly assaulted his wife and her female family members. Upon receiving the information, the Virtual Women Police Station dispatched police to the location.

Preliminary investigations revealed that the woman was living with her parents, and her husband would come daily to assault her. During one of these incidents, when other women in the house tried to intervene, the suspect brandished a pistol. The police took immediate action, arrested the suspect, and registered a case against him.

The Safe Cities spokesperson said that legal proceedings against the suspect have been initiated.

Women are encouraged to immediately call 15 and press 2 to connect with the Virtual Women Police Station in case of any emergency, the spokesperson added.

Tariq Haroon, Tajik Ambassador discuss strategies for mutual growth



F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: H.E. Sharifzoda Yousof Toir, Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan, along with Deputy Head of Mission Mr. Saidjon Shafiev, called on Minister of State/Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Digital Media, Fahd Haroon, at his office today.

The meeting focused on the evolving media and digital media landscapes, with both sides exchanging insights on opportunities and challenges in these sectors. In addition to digital media, discus-

sions also covered areas of mutual interest, including business and cultural cooperation, with both parties emphasizing the importance of enhancing bilateral ties in these fields.

Minister of State/Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Digital Media, Fahd Haroon, highlighted the growing importance of digital media in shaping public discourse and outlined Pakistan's efforts to engage with global partners on digital issues, including tackling misinformation and bridging the digital divide.

Both sides agreed on the potential for deeper collaboration in the areas of digital media, business, and culture, with a view to strengthening long-term relations.

"I look forward to continued engagement with the Republic of Tajikistan and exploring new avenues for cooperation in digital media and other sectors," said Minister Fahd Haroon following the meeting.

The meeting concluded with both sides expressing a commitment to further strengthening the bilateral relationship between Pakistan and Tajikistan.

SC suspends two decisions

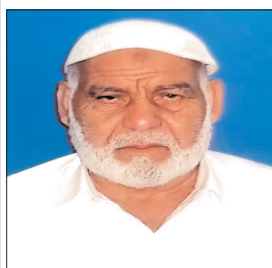
F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Supreme Court has suspended two significant decisions of the Sindh High Court following an appeal by the Sindh Public Service Commission (SPSC).

The appeal was filed by SPSC challenging the Sindh High Court's directive to conduct interviews for certain unsuccessful candidates. A three-member bench, led by Justice Aminuddin Khan, heard the case.

SPSC's counsel, Hafiz Ehsan Khokhar, informed the court that in 2021, 22,877 candidates appeared for the combined competitive examination conducted by the commission.

Haji Iqbal Shah passes away



FP.Report

PESHAWAR: Haji Iqbal Shah, who belonged to Bara Qamber Khel tribe of District Khyber Tehsil passed away. He is the father of Haji Abdul Rehman, the brother of late Haji Zaiwar Shah, the late Haji Sher Badshah and the cousin of Haji Gulbar. His funeral prayer will be offered today, Tuesday, December 3 at 11 am at Eid Gah Meera Mashu Gagar.

Punjab's first regulatory authority established to tackle inflation: CM

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif chaired the first official meeting of the Punjab Enforcement and Regulatory Authority (PERA) to address crucial issues such as inflation and encroachments, here on Monday.

During the meeting, the CM set a target to make PERA operational within three months. The meeting also saw the approval of key matters related to the authority's establishment, appointments, regulations, and other procedures.

Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz directed that all

appointments and hiring within PERA be carried out with complete transparency and merit. She also emphasized the need for an effective monitoring system for the authority's operations.

Additionally, the formation of committees related to PERA was approved, and positions for the headquarters, divisions, districts, and tehsils were also approved. Each tehsil will have Sub-Divisional Enforcement Officers, Investigation Officers, Senior Sergeants, and Sergeants appointed.

The meeting also approved the transfer and deputation policy for PERA and the appointment of hearing officers for appeals at enforcement stations. Furthermore, the procurement plan and determination of powers for the Director General of PERA were also approved.

The meeting also finalized the design and branding for PERA's vehicles, uniforms, and caps, as well as the formation of a special committee to review PERA's operational procedures and regulations for 2024.

Czech Ambassador calls on Karachi Mayor

KARACHI (APP): Ambassador of the Czech Republic, Ladislav Stienhubel on Monday met with Karachi Mayor Barrister Murtaza Wahab at the head office of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation, and they discussed matters of mutual interest and bilateral relations.

Barrister Murtaza welcomed the Ambassador of the Czech Republic to the KMC and briefed him on the city's history and the ongoing development projects aimed at improving Karachi. The discussion focused on mutual cooperation in sectors such as investment, energy, tourism, and training.

Barrister Murtaza stated that Karachi is the industrial and business hub of the country, and given its geographical importance, there are vast investment opportunities available here.

The current government

is striving to provide a conducive environment for investment and offer facilities to investors. Industrial zones in Karachi are being developed to boost exports and stabilize the national economy, he said.

He emphasized that foreign cooperation and partnerships would be welcomed in Karachi's development projects, and such collaborations would benefit the people of both countries. The aim is to provide the citizens of Karachi with facilities comparable to those of other developed cities around the world, for which a coordinated and systematic strategy is being implemented.

He said that the provincial government is fully supporting this initiative, and the Czech investors and experts are warmly welcomed to Karachi. Business delegations' visits can help increase bilateral relations

and open new avenues for cooperation, he said.

Ladislav Stienhubel, the Czech Ambassador, expressed that Karachi is an important city and business hub of Pakistan, and developing it will bring benefits to the country. He conveyed best wishes from the Czech Republic for the development of Karachi and hoped that bilateral cooperation between Pakistan and the Czech Republic would increase, particularly in the areas of technology transfer and infrastructure development.

Later, the Czech Ambassador, along with Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab, visited the historical building of KMC and showed interest in the history of the Council Hall.

Mayor Karachi briefed the esteemed guest on the KMC's historical building and the Council Hall.



PESHAWAR: An artist giving the final touches to a handmade decorative house in his workshop at Dabgari area. — APP Photo

Major reshuffle in KP police department initiated

Syed Adnan

PESHAWAR: In a significant reshuffle within the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police Department, several senior police officers have been transferred to new postings across the province. Dr. Zahid Ullah has been transferred and posted as

the District Police Officer (DPO) Kohat, while Muhammad Omer Khan assumes the role of AIG Telecommunication Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Asif Bahader has been posted as DPO South Waziristan Lower, and Nasir Mahmood has been transferred to Swat as DPO. In other key appoint-

ments, Mukhtiar Ahmad has been posted as Deputy Commandant of FRP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Sajjad Ahmad Sahibzada takes over as DPO DI Khan. Additionally, Arshad Khan has been posted as DPO South Waziristan Upper. Among acting appointments, Ms. Resham

Jehangir has been posted as Acting SP City at Headquarters Mansehra, Farmanullah as Acting DPO Kohistan Upper, and Malik Habib Khan as Acting SP at CCP. This reshuffle aims to enhance administrative efficiency and strengthen law enforcement across the province.

Chicken Soup: A bowl of comfort for cold winter days

PESHAWAR (APP): As the cold winds of winter sweep across Peshawar, a sense of warmth and nostalgia fills the air, courtesy of a local dish that has become synonymous with the chilly season—chicken soup.

For Zard Ali, a 35-year-old soup seller, winter is not just a season but a time of opportunity to earn maximum capital for his family.

Standing proudly in the bustling Qisakhwani Bazaar, a historic marketplace known for its vibrant storytellers, Zard Ali shares

customers. The soup is not only a source of comfort but also a means of connection, as people swap stories and discuss their day-to-day affairs amidst the cold while sitting in traditional Charpayees..

Zard Ali's soup business is deeply rooted in family tradition. He inherited the craft from his late father, Pasham Khan, who was known for his skill in preparing this beloved winter dish.

"I am proud to carry forward my father's legacy. The soup recipe is special;

chill. The cold weather has led many residents to flock to local shops with their families to enjoy these warm traditional dishes especially at night.

There has been a noticeable increase in footfall at chicken corn soup and yakhani stalls, particularly during the evening and night hours, in both the city and cantonment areas.

These soups, popular for their warmth and flavor, have become a favorite choice for those seeking comfort during the chilly season.

Shopkeepers have responded to the demand by setting up special stalls offering chicken soups with various sauces and boiled eggs, leading to profitable sales during the winter months.

These stalls are especially popular in busy areas like Hashtnagri, Karimpura, Gul Bahar, Nothia, Jhangirabad, Board, and Hayatabad, attracting large crowds, particularly after dark.

Ali Manahan, owner of a famous soup outlet at Ghanta Ghar Peshawar said that his sale was almost doubled these days.

The prices for soup are variable, with small to medium-sized cups priced between Rs 80 to Rs 100, while larger portions are being sold for Rs 120 to Rs 140, he said.

In comparison, the price of a bowl of chicken yakhani has increased to Rs 50-60 this year, up from Rs 40-45 in 2023. This price hike has led to occasional disputes between consumers and vendors.

Riaz Khan, a local vendor, explained that the demand for chicken corn soup and yakhani has

spiked due to the colder weather. He noted that additional ingredients and sauces are being used to enhance the flavor of the soup, which justifies the higher prices.

Qaiser Khan, a former public sector employee who visited Hashtnagri bazaar with his family, shared his enthusiasm for the traditional Peshawari corn soup.

"The taste is unmatched, thanks to the variety of sauces," he said, adding that he had been coming to Peshawar in winter for this dish since his childhood. However, he expressed concern over the rising prices in Peshawar and urged the district administration to regulate the costs.

Qaiser Khan also preferred chicken yakhani over soup for its longer-lasting warmth and affordability and mentioned that a chicken leg piece with yakhani is now priced at Rs 200-250, compared to Rs 150-180 last year.

He called for government intervention to regulate the pricing of these popular winter foods for the benefit of consumers.

The rising prices and growing demand for these winter specialties highlight the essential role of chicken corn soup and yakhani in Peshawar's cold-weather culture.

However, many are calling for price controls to ensure accessibility for all.

In the heart of Peshawar, where tradition and culture blend seamlessly, Zard Ali's chicken soup stall is more than just a business.

It is a reminder of the simple joys that bring people together in the coldest of days—a bowl of soup, a warm smile, and the comfort of shared moments.

Post-Promotion Statutory Training commences

PESHAWAR (APP): A three-week Post-Promotion Statutory Training for 25 Senior Civil Judges, Judicial Magistrates, aa'la Illaqa Qazis commenced in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Judicial Academy (KPJA), Peshawar on Monday.

The inaugural ceremony was chaired by Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim, Chief Justice, Peshawar High Court, Chairman KPJA, as the Chief Guest. Other distinguished personalities included Barrister Ikhtiar Khan, Registrar of Peshawar High Court, Jahanzeb Shinwari, Director General KPJA, Zia Ur Rahman; Dean Faculty; Senior Director Research Dr. Qazi Ataullah, Station Director Aurangzeb Khalil and directors and officers of KPJA.

In his address, Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim congratulated the participants on their promotion to the positions of Senior Civil Judges, Aa'la Illaqa Qazis. The Chief Justice highlighted the significant role of Senior Civil Judges, in managing a wide range of responsibilities, including human resource management, financial management, judicial infrastructure, and technology utilization.

Highlighting the need for improvement in process-serving agency, the Chief Justice urged for proper supervision and

meaningful vigilance. For timely service of court process, he emphasized on the utilization of modern modes and new techniques of information such as Messenger, WhatsApp, Cell-Phone, E-mail and many more.

The Chief Justice specifically drew the attention of the participants towards their function as Family Court. He placed great emphasis on saving the couple from disintegration. For this objective, the Judges, Qazis should have full command over the family issues, such as Nikah, Talaq, Khula, Iddat, maintenance, child custody and significant inheritance, he added.

The Chief Guest applauded the Academy for imparting training to the young male and female lawyers of Baluchistan Province. He also appreciated the Academy for arranging visit to the Sindh Judicial Academy for the purpose of cross-provincial professional development.

Earlier, in his welcome address, the Director General KPJA thanked the Chief Guest for his presence on the occasion. He also welcomed the participants and congratulated them on their promotion as well as their selection for the training. He shared the details of the training program and contents of the training course.

City Police nab alleged narcotics supplier

PESHAWAR (APP): Capital City Police an alleged supplier of ice and other narcotics to specific buyers in the city on Monday and recovered one kilogram of hashish and ice drug from his possession.

The arrested alleged accused is the resident of Kohati Gate and after the registration of FIR formal investigations against him have been initiated against him. The Capital City Police have received a tip that an alleged narcotics suppliers Gilani, who is used to supply ice and other drugs to buyers while roaming on streets is present in the jurisdiction of the City Police Station (Kothwali) on which the concerned

Station House Officer (SHO) along with a police party conducted an immediate raid and arrested the alleged accused Abdul Rehman son of Khan Malik, resident of Kohati Gate localities.

Meanwhile, several alleged accused were arrested during a targeted crackdown against criminals in the jurisdiction of

Police Station Sarband. During the operation, SHO Sarband along with a police party also recovered a Kalashnikov, five pistols, magazines and cartridges of different bore weapons. Police Station Sarband has registered FIRs against the arrested accused and started investigations against them from different aspects.

83 shopkeepers arrested for profiteering

PESHAWAR (APP): District administration arrested 83 shopkeepers for profiteering and issued warning to 241 others for bringing improvement in their practices, said a press release issued here on Monday.

The crackdown was launched on the directives of the provincial government and continued for three consecutive days. During the operation, the teams of the district administration inspected 568 business units and arrested 83 shopkeepers including butchers, bakers, fruit & vegetable sellers, grocers and others.

These arrests were made for profiteering, selling of under-weight roti and lack of the official price list. The operation was carried out on University Road, Charsadda Road, Dalzak Road, Circular Road, bazaars of the interior

city, Hayatabad and other localities.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Peshawar Sarmad Saleem has directed the officers of the district administration to pay random inspections of the bazaars and initiate legal proceedings against the profiteers.



PESHAWAR: View of an open manhole in the middle of the road at Firdous Chowk which may cause any deadly incident. — INP photo

Eight more cases of chikungunya reported

PESHAWAR (APP): In the provincial metropolis, eight more cases of chikungunya infection have been reported, taking the tally of total cases to 14.

Director Public Health, Dr Irshad Roghani said on Monday that the new cases of chikungunya were reported through

Contact Tracing. Dr Irshad Roghani further said that blood samples of 21 affected people were sent to the Public Health Reference where 8

samples were confirmed with chikungunya infection.

He said the process of more Contact Tracing was underway.

FAPUASA, PUTA denounce proposed amendments in KP Universities Act

PESHAWAR (APP): The Federation of All Pakistan Universities Academic Staff Association (FAPUASA), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chapter and other bodies of provincial teaches strongly opposed the proposed amendments to the KP Universities Act.

"We demand the immediate withdrawal of these amendments, which pose a serious threat to the academic autonomy of universities and jeopardize their fundamental mission," said President FAPUASA Prof Hamayun Khan and General Secretary Dr Farman Ullah.

These amendments appear to be a deliberate attempt to undermine the independence of universities, opening the door for bureaucratic interference in academic affairs, said a press release issued here.

The intrusion of bureaucrats into institutions dedicated to education and research would replicate the damage they have already inflicted on other sectors in the province. Universities must remain centers of learning, innovation, and academic free-

dom—not extensions of administrative control.

The provincial government's neglect of higher education is evident in its failure to establish a provincial Higher Education Commission (HEC) or allocate adequate funding to universities.

It noted that other provinces have made significant investments in their higher education systems while KP government has fallen alarmingly behind, adding that Sindh government has allocated Rs 35 billion for higher

education, Punjab Rs 18 billion and Balochistan Rs six billion for its 12 universities. In stark contrast, the PTI-led government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, despite being in power for a third consecutive term, has failed to allocate significant funding for its 34 public sector universities, it deplored.

Instead of supporting the province's higher education sector, the government has focused its efforts on protests, strikes, and political Dharnas, draining provincial resources.



PESHAWAR: A vendor arranging fresh coconuts to catch the attention of passersby and boost sales at Namak Mandi.



In brief

Police arrest 2 drug smugglers

ATTOCK (APP): Attock police have arrested two notorious drug dealers in separate operations on Monday. According to police, the arrests were made in accordance with the directives of District Police Officer (DPO), Attock, Dr Sardar Ghayas Gul Khan and recovered 1.6 kilograms of hashish from Muhammad Tahir, a notorious drug dealer and resident of Nartopa Tehsil, Hazro. In another operation, police at Fateh Jang Police Station apprehended another drug dealer. These arrests are part of Attock Police's ongoing efforts to curb drug trafficking in the region. The Attock Police's crackdown on drug trafficking is a welcome move, and their efforts to keep the community safe and free from the menace of drugs are commendable. Police Station recovered 871 grams of hashish from Usman Aziz, resident of Fateh Jang. Cases have been registered against the accused and they have been sent to jail.

3-day training program F.P. Report

QUETTA: Additional Deputy Commissioner (AGDC) Harnai Arbab Saeed Ali Kasi formally inaugurated the three-day training program for the seventh and first digital agricultural census. Additional General Deputy Commissioner Harnai, Deputy District Education Officer Mushtaq Ahmed Tareen, Census District Coordinator Muhammad Imran Yousafzai Quetta and Census District Coordinator Harnai Ghulam Jelani Tareen participated in the program. During the inauguration ceremony, the officers involved emphasized that the agricultural census is crucial for national development and effective planning. Therefore, all the participants should fully understand the technical aspects and usefulness of agricultural census and fulfill their responsibilities in the best possible way. In the meeting, it was further emphasized that all the participants should utilize their capabilities to achieve the desired results and make this process a success. They said in the meeting that the proposed agriculture census would play an important role in conducting it in a clean, transparent and effective manner.

25 gangs busted, 526 POs arrested

FAISALABAD (APP): The police have busted over 25 criminal gangs by arresting their 60 active members in addition to 526 Proclaimed Offenders (POs) from different parts of Faisalabad during November 2024. Police spokesman said here on Monday that the police recovered stolen property worth Rs.18,232 million in addition to 123 motorcycles, 19 cattle, 14 mobile phones, 42 pistols (30-bore) and 2 guns from the possession of the criminals and registered 27 cases against them. He further said that the police arrested 477 court absconders and 526 Proclaimed Offenders (POs) including 110 POs of category-A. The police also nabbed 456 drug traffickers and recovered 225,335 kilograms (kg) charas, 5,560 kg heroin, 2,820 kg ice, 25,700 kg bhakki (poppy dust), 660 liters un-distilled wine and 6018 liters liquor from their possession. Similarly, the police arrested 289 illicit weapon holders and recovered 248 pistols, 18 guns, 8 rifles, 10 Kalashnikovs, 4 repeaters and hundreds of bullets/cartridges besides arresting 229 gamblers along with bet money during this period, he added.



CHINIOT: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Qaiser Ahmed Shaikh, distributing sewing machines among poor ladies.

Farmers are backbone of our economy: Tareen

Saqib Mushtaq

LODHARAN: "A stable agricultural economy is vital for Pakistan's progress, and the sugar industry plays a significant role in strengthening the country's economic foundation while fulfilling domestic needs and earning valuable foreign exchange," said Jahangir Khan Tareen during his visit to JK Sugar Mills in Mian Channu.

Accompanied by Ali Khan Tareen, Tareen engaged with local farmers and reviewed the mill's operations. He emphasized the pivotal role of farmers in the country's agricultural sector, stating, "Farmers are the backbone of our economy, and their progress will strengthen and foster economic



growth."

During his interaction, Tareen reassured farmers of his commitment to their welfare, adding, "We remain committed to supporting farmers by ensuring timely payments like always and providing them with the best possible facilities."

Farmers expressed their gratitude to Tareen and the mill's management for their dedication to resolving challenges faced by sugarcane suppliers. They appreciated the mill's commitment to upholding ethical practices and providing financial security.

Educational institutions reopen in Kurram F.P. Report

PARACHINAR: Educational institutions in Kurram district reopened after 10 days, however, the shortage of food items persists due to road closures.

According to the district administration on Monday, after two weeks of intense tension, the situation in Kurram is starting to return to normal. A ceasefire has been implemented since last evening which resulted in reopening of the educational institutions in Kurram after 10 days. Despite the reduction in tension, roads such as the Peshawar-Parachinar Road remain closed, leading to a continued shortage of food, medicines, and petrol in the area.

Six motorcycles stolen in a day F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Unknown thieves stole 6 motorcycles of citizens in different places in a single day. According to the details, the first incident took place in Isa Nagri from where the unknown thief stole the motorcycle of Amir Javed Masih.

In the second incident, motorcycle of Ali Raza cycle was stolen from Bahawalpura gala Shailer Wala. In the third incident, motorcycle of Khan Junaid was stolen from street Jami House. The fourth incident took place on Madhrianwala Road from where unknown thieves stole motorcycle of Sidi Ahmed.

In the fifth incident, motorcycle of Mohammad Shehroz was stolen from Gali Purana Police Station City Hafizabad. The sixth incident took place outside the Police Sahulat Centre where Salman Ashraf resident of Khalike came to get the motorcycle license and unknown thieves also stole his motorcycle. Police registered cases but a single accused has not been arrested so far.

Open court arranged F.P. Report

MANSEHRA: Following the directives of Federal Ombudsman Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi, open courts are being organized at district and tehsil levels to provide quick, affordable, and free justice to the public.

As part of this initiative, Rashid Ahmad, Advisor and In-Charge of the Federal Ombudsman Secretariat's Regional Office in Hazara Division, will preside over an open court on Friday, December 6, 2024, at 11:00 AM at the Tehsil Municipal Hall, Mansehra.

The session aims to address public complaints related to federal departments, including WAPDA, Sui Gas, NADRA, Post Office, National Highways Authority, Benazir Income Support Program, Pakistan Bail-ul-Mal, and the Passport Office. Complaints will be heard, and immediate actions will be taken to resolve them. Rashid Ahmad assured that all grievances would be resolved within 60 days.

Pakistan bilingual desalination contest held



F.P. Report

SANGHAR: The 6th All Pakistan Bilingual Declaration Contest was organized, at Cadet College Sanghar (CCS). Senator Qurat-ul-Ain Marri, graced this mega event as the Chief Guest.

In the event, 45 x elite institutions from all over Pakistan participated by sending their 90 x best male & female speakers. The contestants delivered impressive speeches on both serious and humorous topics. The jury comprising of experienced panel of judges belonging to reputable institutions of Pakistan evaluated the performance of the speakers.

While addressing the audience, the Senator Qurat-ul-Ain Marri emphasized the students to always remain diligent, resilient and optimistic to scale the pinnacle of success as mentioned by one of the speakers, "Rough tides refine the sailor's art." She congratulated the Prize Winning Teams & appreciated CCS efforts for organizing and hosting this mega event in a

triumphant manner. Earlier, in his welcome address, Cdre Zeeshan Ali SI(M), Commandant/ Principal CCS expressed his profound gratitude to the Chief Guest for gracing the event. He highlighted the significance of Oratory Skills and appreciated contestants for their enthusiastic participation.

In English Declaration, Ms Misbah Imran from Isra University, Hyderabad clinched the 1st Position, while Ms Shahnoor Rajpoot from Govt College University, Hyderabad stood 2nd and Ms Areeba Imran from Liaquat University of Medical & Health Sciences, Jamshoro secured the 3rd position. While in Urdu Declaration, Cadet Ghazain from Cadet College Ormara achieved 1st position, the 2nd position was won by Ms Mariyam Ameer from NUML University, Karachi & the 3rd position was secured by Ms Zoya Ahmed from Karachi Medical and Dental College, Karachi. The consolation prizes in English

Category were awarded to Ms Hareem Fatima from Hayat College Fatima Campus & Mr Abbas Mehdi from Govt Degree Boys College, Nawabshah and in Urdu Category to Cadet Abdul Haseeb from Marine Academy, Karachi & Ms Affaf Sikandar from Tabani's College (PECHS Campus). The Champion Trophy of the 6th All-Pakistan Bilingual Declaration Contest - 2024 was clinched by the team of Cadet College Ormara, while the Runner-up Trophy was won by the team of University of Karachi.

To maintain the interest of audience, CCS cadets performed cultural shows in between the declamation sessions. Horse & Buggy Rides, Shooting at CCS firing range, visit of Faiz Mahal Art Gallery, Swimming Pool & CCS Orchards and serving of Fresh Milk Tea at College Dairy Farm were also arranged for Participants & Guests. The teams thoroughly enjoyed their stay and were thankful for great hospitality showed by CCS management.

Vaccination against deadly diseases in AJK starts

F.P. Report

MIRPUR: Big Catch-up, a two-week-long campaign for the immunization of children under five years of age who were left without a dose of immunization of vaccines against 12 deadly diseases, due to any reason, is being launched from Monday, December 2, across Azad Jammu Kashmir, including in this lake district of Mirpur, official sources said.

"The integrated drive is being launched in the state by the AJK state health department with the support of the World Health Organization and the Federal Directorate of Immunization," sources told APP here Sunday when contacted. The move is being initiated to ensure the routine immunization of

children under 05 years of age. Mirpur District Health Officer Dr. Fida Hussain Raja said that the Big Catch-up campaign will commence from December 2 and continue till December 14, 2024, without any pause.

In this campaign, at least 16,368 children under 5 years of age will be administered doses of vaccines against 12 deadly diseases by the mobile paramedical teams of the State Health Department, Dr. Fida said. The SHO expressed these views at the awareness seminar organized for stakeholders in the Deputy Commissioner's Office late Saturday.

District Health Officer Dr. Fida Hussain Raja said that children under five years of age will be given carotene immunization in

all EPI centers of the state health department. Apart from this, 35 mobile teams of the Public Health Department will conduct outreach sessions in different areas of the district to provide routine immunization to the children, he further added.

District Health Officer Mirpur briefed the participants on the importance and efficacy of immunization and urged the stakeholders to play their full role in this regard. On this occasion, Deputy Commissioner Mirpur Yasir Riaz appealed to the public to cooperate with the health department paramedical teams getting their children vaccinated to protect them from 12 deadly diseases, ensuring the emergence of a true healthy society.



QUETTA: Chairman of PkMAP, Mahmood Khan Achakzai addressing public gathering.

Qaiser lays foundation for two new public parks

F.P. Report

CHINIOT: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh laid foundation stone for establishment of two new public parks in Chiniot on Monday and vowed his commitment to public service and urban development in the area.

Among the new public parks in the city included "Fatima Ladies Park" in Mohalla Mashki Shah and "Irfan Qaiser Sheikh Park" near Lorry Adda Chiniot. Addressing the foundation stone ceremony, the minister highlighted these projects as part of a broader initiative to create recreational spaces for the residents.

"Parks and sports grounds contribute to a healthier and happier society", he said, adding that these facilities would enhance Chiniot's urban landscape and quality of life.

The minister also arranged an open court at his office in Chiniot and heard public grievances relating to provision of civic amenities, utilities and health services. He said that redressal of public problems was collective responsibility. He issued on-spot directions for immediate resolution of public problems relating to electricity, gas supply, sanitation, and healthcare facilities.

Reflecting on his

decade-long efforts to improve Chiniot's infrastructure, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh expressed his vision for a prosperous and vibrant city. He said that Chiniot had tremendous potential as a hub for development and the development projects were steps towards unlocking that potential. He emphasized the importance of community participation and efficient governance in achieving sustainable growth.

He reiterated his commitment to addressing public grievances and ensuring timely development and said, "Our goal is to deliver results that make a tangible difference in the lives of the citizens."



WEST BANK: Palestinians inspecting a bullet-riddled car after an Israeli operation in Jenin area.

Japan's popular Princess Aiko turns 23

TOKYO (AP): Japan's popular Princess Aiko turned 23, as she takes on more official duties even while her future in the imperial family remains in doubt. Aiko, the only child of Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako, graduated from university earlier this year and has since been participating in official duties and palace rituals while working at the Red Cross Society, according to the Imperial Household Agency.

But Japanese law requires her to renounce her royal status and leave the family if she marries outside the imperial family. The vast majority of Japan's public supports changing the law to allow her to remain a royal and become emperor, but conservatives in the governing party insist on keeping male-only succession. Japan's rapidly dwindling imperial family has only 16 members, including four men. Aiko was to mark her birthday with her parents at the imperial palace in Tokyo. The IHA also released several photos of Aiko, including one of her standing by a persimmon tree at a palace garden. Another showed her holding pieces of traditional hand-crafted washi paper that she made at a workshop during her first solo official trip in October to the National Sports Festival in Japan's southwestern prefecture of Saga.

The 1947 Imperial House Law,



which largely preserves conservative prewar family values, allows only males to take the throne and forces female royals who marry outside the family to give up their status. With only one young male member, that puts the survival of the 2,000-year-old monarchy in jeopardy. The youngest male member of the imperial family, Prince Hisahito - Aiko's 18-year-old cousin - is currently the last heir apparent, posing a major problem for the system. The government is looking for a way to keep the suc-

cession stable without relying on women, such as allowing the family to adopt new male members from former noble families that lost their status after World War II. Aiko's own views on the topic are unknown. She's only had one full news conference, when she reached adulthood.

Last month, the United Nations women's rights committee in Geneva issued a report that called for the Japanese government to allow a female emperor, among other issues hindering gender equality in the country. Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi dismissed the report "regrettable" and "inappropriate." He said the imperial succession is a matter of fundamental national identity and that it is not covered by constitutional basic rights. Crown Prince Akishino, Aiko's uncle, was asked about the succession debate at a news conference marking his 59th birthday, and replied that members of the royal family are "living humans" and that the palace officials who support their daily lives should know how it affects them. At her work at the Japanese Red Cross Society, Aiko is assigned to volunteer training program, the IHA said. On weekends, it said, the princess enjoys taking walks with her parents and playing volleyball, tennis and badminton with palace officials.

50 dead and dozens missing after Nigeria boat sinks

ABUJA (BBC): At least 54 bodies have now been recovered from Nigeria's River Niger after a boat, that may have been carrying more than 200 passengers, capsized, the authorities say. Twenty-four of those on board were rescued, some of whom are still in hospital, but dozens of others may be missing.

Divers are still searching the waters but hope is fading on the possibility of finding more survivors. This is just the latest in a long series of boat accidents on the country's inland waterways. Despite safety recommendations being made, rules are rarely followed and few are held accountable. The boat was travelling from Kogi state, central Nigeria, to a weekly market in neighbouring Niger state when it went down. Market traders and farm labourers were thought to have been among the passengers. The cause of the accident is not yet known but there are indications that many of the travellers may not have been wearing life jackets as required.

Getting accurate details about who exactly had boarded the boat is difficult because there was no record keeping, the local official in charge told the BBC. "The problem is that there's no passenger manifest and because of the time the accident occurred, giving an accurate account of persons, survivors and those missing, is very difficult," Justin Uche, who is head of the Kogi state office of the National Emergency Management Agency said. Meanwhile Kogi state's governor Usman Ododo ordered all hospitals where survivors are receiving treatment to ensure that they get adequate care including food. He also urged stricter enforcement of safety regulations to ensure that such incidents are avoided in future. This is the third time a passenger boat has gone down in Nigeria in the last 60 days. Last month, a wooden dugout canoe, packed with nearly 300 passengers, overturned and sank in the middle of the River Niger killing nearly 200 people. Just last week, five people died when two boats collided in southern Nigeria's Delta state.

Namibia Opp refuses to recognise poll result

NAIMEY (BBC): Namibia's main opposition party has said it will not recognise results from this week's general election, where there have been logistical problems and voting was extended in several places. In a statement, Panduleni Itula, the presidential candidate for the opposition Independent Patriots for Change (IPC) alleged there had been "glaring and undeniable" electoral malpractices.

He had been aiming to defeat the candidate for the South West Africa People's Organisation (Swapo), which has been in power since independence in 1990. Swapo's flagbearer, Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, is seeking to become the country's first female president. Voting began but in parts of the country continued, following a lack of ballot papers in some places as well as malfunctioning technical equipment. Namibia is a geographically vast nation with about three million people, around half of whom are registered to vote. "We shall not, under any circumstances, recognise the outcome of the 2024 election... that is still, in our opinion, illegitimately continuing," Itula told a press conference, while calling for calm. The IPC has said it will "pursue justice through the courts" and has encouraged people who felt that they had been unable to vote because of mismanagement by the electoral commission to go to the police to make a statement. Meanwhile, votes are being counted and results in the presidential election from 10 of the 121 constituencies have been announced. So far, Nandi-Ndaitwah has 48% of the vote to Itula's 30%. A candidate needs more than half the ballots cast in order to win in the first round, otherwise there will be a second-round run-off.

UN suspends aid deliveries through main Gaza crossing

NEW YORK (BBC): The UN agency providing aid to Palestinians has said it is suspending deliveries through the main crossing between Israel and Gaza because of security concerns. The head of Unrwa, Philippe Lazzarini, said two recent convoys had been looted by armed gangs near the Kerem Shalom crossing and called on Israel to maintain law and order.

Israel has previously said that it facilitates the passage of aid into Gaza and accused Hamas of hijacking and stealing deliveries. Kerem Shalom is the main route for delivering aid to the more than two million people in Gaza, which the UN has warned is on the brink of famine. Recent weeks have seen a series of increasingly violent thefts by criminal gangs, which aid workers have said are now the main obstacle to the distribution of supplies. On 16 November, a convoy of 109 lorries carrying food was attacked by masked men who held the drivers at gunpoint before stealing 97 of the lorries. A notorious Gazan criminal family later blocked the main road leading away from Kerem Shalom for two days, erecting iron barriers and report-

edly firing on lorries trying to access an aid distribution point. Aid workers and locals have also alleged that armed men operate within plain sight of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) in a restricted zone at the Israel-Gaza border.

Announcing the pause in deliveries, Mr Lazzarini said the road away from the crossing 'has not been safe for months', citing the theft of five more lorries as well as the incident last month. The announcement also followed the death of three people employed by World Central Kitchen (WCK), a food charity, and two others in an Israeli strike. Israel said the target of the strike was a WCK employee who had taken part in the 7 October attacks. "The delivery of humanitarian aid must never be dangerous or turn into an ordeal," Mr Lazzarini said. He said there had been a "breakdown of law and order" and that the responsibility to protect aid workers lay with Israel. "They must ensure aid flows into Gaza safely and must refrain from attacks on humanitarian workers," he said.

Israel has in recent months opened a number of other crossings into central and northern Gaza following international pressure to

increase the flow of aid, but Kerem Shalom remains the one through which most aid enters Gaza. Speaking at the UN in September, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu insisted his government was allowing the equivalent of "more than 3,000 calories a day for every man, woman, and child" into Gaza. He accused Hamas of stealing aid deliveries and selling food at exorbitant prices as a means of maintaining control in the strip.

Last month, a review by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification - which is run by the UN and a group of international charities - said the number of aid shipments crossing into Gaza was lower than at any time since the current conflict began in October 2023. It warned that the "humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip [was] extremely grave and rapidly deteriorating", adding that, under a "reasonable worst-case scenario, a risk of famine existed for the whole of the Gaza Strip". The review said "immediate action [was] required from all actors who are directly taking part in the conflict, or have influence on its conduct, to avert and alleviate this catastrophic situation".

West African country marks French colonial massacre

DAKAR (AP): Biram Senghor regularly pays his respects at a military cemetery in Thiaryoye, a fishing village near Senegal's capital Dakar, bowing in front of a different grave each time. The 86-year-old has no way of knowing which grave belongs to his father, M'Bap Senghor, one of the hundreds of West African riflemen who fought for France during World War II but were likely killed on Dec. 1, 1944, by the French army after demanding unpaid wages.

In this cemetery, where they are supposedly buried, all the graves are anonymous and the exact location of the remains is unknown, as is the number of victims. The true scale and circumstances of the killings remain unclear as Senegal commemorates the 80th anniversary of the massacre, threatening to reignite smoldering tensions between France and the former colony. "I have been fighting to get answers for over 80 years," says Biram Senghor. "French President Emmanuel Macron cannot do what the other French presidents before him did: France has to repent." The West Africans were members of the unit called "Tirailleurs Sénégalais," a corps of colonial infantry in

the French Army that fought in both World Wars. According to historians, there were disputes over unpaid wages in the days before the massacre and on Dec. 1, French troops turned on the unarmed African soldiers and shot them dead.

For decades, French authorities tried to minimize what had happened in Thiaryoye. Reports by the French military shortly after the massacre determined that 35 West African soldiers were killed in response to a "mutiny." Other reports by the French army mention 70 deaths. But today, many French and Senegalese historians agree the true death toll is likely in the hundreds, with some speaking of almost 400 African soldiers killed, based on estimates of the number of riflemen present at the camp on the day of the massacre. Macron officially recognized the events of Thiaryoye as a massacre for the first time in a letter to Senegal's President Diomaye Faye, which was seen by The Associated Press. "France must recognize that on that day, the confrontation between soldiers and riflemen who demanded their full legitimate wages be paid, triggered a chain of events that resulted in a massacre," read Macron's letter.

But many historians dispute the idea of a confrontation between the French soldiers and the West African riflemen. "What happened on December 1st was the execution of unarmed soldiers," says Martin Mourre, a French historian and author of Thiaryoye 1944, History and Memory of a Colonial Massacre. He points to the fact that no weapons were mentioned during the trial of the African riflemen accused of mutiny and the absence of any injuries among the French soldiers as evidence that no confrontation took place. In his letter to the Senegalese president, Macron did not mention the number of soldiers killed.

The controversies and unknowns about the massacre are in part due to a lack of transparency by French authorities regarding the military reports and testimonies. In 2014, French President Francois Hollande handed over the European nation's archives on Thiaryoye to Macky Sall, then-president of Senegal. But historians say that key documents, including ones indicating the site of the mass graves and the number of West African soldiers present at the camp on the day of the massacre, are still missing.

How a Ugandan opposition leader disappeared in Kenya

NAIROBI (BBC): The mysterious detention of Uganda's opposition leader Kizza Besigye while on a visit to Kenya nearly two weeks ago has sparked widespread condemnation and fears of a clandestine exchange of intelligence between the two neighbours. Besigye's allies and wife have come out to reveal harrowing details of how the opposition chief was apparently lured to meet his abductors, said to have disguised themselves as Kenyan security agents.

Reports say he was spied on from the time he boarded a plane at Entebbe airport in Uganda for Kenya's capital, Nairobi, where he was picked up, before somehow being transferred to a military court back home without any extradition proceedings. While Kenya insists it played no role and is investigating the incident, Uganda holds that Kenya was fully aware of the plan, citing intelligence correspondence aimed at tracking Besigye down. As he is due to return to military court in Kampala, we piece together what we know so far. Besigye has contested and lost four presidential elections against President Yoweri Museveni, who has been in power since 1986. He has been less active in politics recently, and did not contest the 2021 election.

But earlier this year, he formed a new party, the People's Front for Freedom (PFF) after breaking away from the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), which he founded two decades ago.

The opposition politician has for years travelled to Kenya and moved freely, sometimes to attend high-profile events - even while he remained Museveni's main challenger and biggest critic. This time, Besigye travelled to Nairobi to attend the launch of a book by Kenyan opposition politician Martha Karua. The 68-year-old landed in the city on the morning of 16 November and took a taxi to his hotel in the affluent suburb of Hurlingham. He was accompanied by long-term ally Hajj Obaid Lutale. A few hours later, he left the hotel, boarded a taxi and headed to Riverside Drive, some 5km (three miles) from his hotel, for a private meeting, according to his political allies.

This was the last time he was seen until he re-emerged in Uganda four days later. His taxi driver said he waited for the veteran politician for more than 12 hours, before deciding to leave when he was unable to phone him. Besigye's team in Uganda started relaying distress calls

after their leader's mobile phones went unanswered. His disappearance hit the headlines and raised eyebrows in the region, with his wife Winnie Byanyima, the head of the UN's organisation to tackle HIV and Aids, taking to social media to report that her husband had been "kidnapped" in Nairobi. The next day, his reserved seat at the book launch, where he was expected to be the guest speaker, remained empty with organisers raising the alarm about his absence. Besigye and his friend Lutale arrived at the apartment along Riverside Drive where he was due to meet an unidentified Ugandan national and another unknown British national, according to Ms Byanyima. The British national supposedly wanted to introduce Besigye to a group of colleagues and businessmen, who had expressed an interest in financially backing the PFF, she said. In the room there was a box of what appeared to be a stash of money. One of the hosts had two guns. Shortly after a brief introduction, eight men in plain clothes who said they were Kenyan police officers knocked on the door and told Besigye and his associate they were under arrest. Ms Byanyima told Kenya's Citizen TV.

Russia has right to exercise self defence against Ukraine: Kim

SEOUL (Reuters): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has told the Russian defence minister that Ukraine's use of long-range weapons is the result of direct military intervention by the United States and Moscow is entitled to fight in self-defence, state media said.

Kim met Russian Defence Minister Andrei Belousov and said "the US and the West made Kyiv authorities attack Russia's territory with their own long-range strike weapons" and Russia should take action to make "hostile forces pay the price," KCNA news agency said. "The DPRK government, army and people will

invariably support the policy of the Russian Federation to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity from the imperialists' moves for hegemony," KCNA quoted Kim as saying.

DPRK is short for North Korea's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Kim pledged to expand ties with Russia in all areas including military affairs under the comprehensive strategic partnership he signed with Russian President Vladimir Putin in June, which includes a mutual defence agreement, KCNA said. Moscow and Pyongyang have dramatically advanced ties since their leaders held

a summit in September last year in Russia, and the North has since shipped more than 10,000 containers of ammunition, as well as self-propelled howitzers and multiple rocket launchers, according to South Korea's spy agency. KCNA made no mention of whether Kim and Belousov discussed North Korea's deployment of troops to Russia. South Korea's spy agency has said North Korea has sent more than 10,000 troops to Russia and they have been moved to frontlines, including the Kursk region where Russian forces are trying to expel Ukrainian forces. Ukraine has fired US ATACMS missiles to strike

Russian territory after the administration of US President Joe Biden gave permission to use them for such an attack this month. Russia in turn unleashed attacks against Ukraine's military and energy infrastructure, saying it was in response to the use of US medium-range missiles. Belousov separately held talks with North Korea's Defence Minister No Kwang Chol and said the partnership pact signed by Kim and Putin will contribute to maintaining balance of power in Northeast Asia. Kim personally attended a reception hosted by the defence ministry for Belousov's delegation, KCNA said.

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Unity is at the heart of the UAE's national project

PEOPLE across the UAE have been marking the official holidays of National Day and Commemoration Day. Although these two collective moments may be different in focus and tone, they share an important theme: unity.

Indeed, the 53rd anniversary of the UAE's foundation is known as Eid Al Etihad – the festival of unity. Much has been achieved in the space of a few generations, from navigating the challenges of unification to wisely using the nation's natural resources to build a modern state that can include space travel among its many accomplishments. Throughout this national journey, the vital ingredient to creating this compelling, stable and successful country has been unity.

The first step was the political unification of the emirates in this part of the Arabian Peninsula in the early 1970s. Over the subsequent decades, a culture of unity was fostered that on one hand treasures the Arab and Islamic heritage native to the country but also embraces tolerance and coexistence, two indispensable values for a country that invited people from all over the world to come and contribute to the national project.

Fostering unity among people in times of stability and success is important, but having a national ethos that is humane also helps to foster togetherness among those for whom life may have taken an unwanted turn. The UAE's insistence that people deserve a second chance was once again highlighted by President Sheikh Mohamed's decision on Wednesday to order the release of almost 2,270 prisoners ahead of Eid Al Etihad. Similarly, an official decision to forgive debts worth more than Dh401 million will allow over 1,270 citizens to begin again with a clean slate. Such gestures are one of the country's strengths.

It is important to remember, however, that the achievements being celebrated on Eid Al Etihad have not come without cost. Protecting the country has been the primary duty of the UAE Armed Forces; from day one, soldiers from the Emirates have been putting their lives on the line. Indeed, Commemoration Day – introduced by the late President Sheikh Khalifa in 2015 – was initially established to commemorate Salem Suhail bin Khamis, who died on November 30, 1971, while fighting against invading forces on the island of Greater Tunb.

Saturday's Commemoration Day was a poignant moment for Emirati families who have lost loved ones in the line of duty. At Abu Dhabi's Wahat Al Karama memorial, the families of 18 members of the armed forces were honoured with the Martyr Medal in recognition of their sacrifices. Sheikh Mohamed led the tributes, emphasising the "enduring gratitude" the country felt for those who "uphold the safety, security and integrity of our beloved nation".

This year is also the 10th anniversary of the introduction of national service. As well as equipping the next generation of Emiratis with the skills needed to defend their country, this programme has also built a bond between families, the military and the state. Such unity is crucial to fostering a sense of collective endeavour and an appreciation of the sacrifices that members of the armed forces are called to make in doing their duty. As such, Commemoration Day compels us to recall the many veterans of the UAE armed forces injured in the line of duty, and the ongoing efforts to support their families and their individual rehabilitation.

If unity has been the cornerstone of the Emirates' beginning, it continues to be the light guiding the nation to the future. The UAE of 2024 is a diverse, cosmopolitan country but its core values – those being celebrated over this long weekend – are the glue that binds it together. Unity is the recognition that what we achieve, we achieve together.

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US needs to rethink its approach to Central Asia

THE foreign policy in-tray for the incoming Trump administration is filled to the brim. As Donald Trump nominates his Cabinet and prepares to reenter the Oval Office in January, major foreign policy issues demand attention. One region that must not be overlooked is Central Asia, an area that holds significant geopolitical and economic importance.

The five Central Asian republics — Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan — are located at the heart of the Eurasian landmass. Since gaining independence in 1991 after the Soviet Union's collapse, they have gradually developed unique foreign policies and national identities. Strategically situated at a historic crossroads for trade and transit, Central Asia has played an essential role in Eurasian commerce for thousands of years. The region, especially near the Caspian Sea, is also rich in natural resources, offering substantial economic potential.

Despite its importance, US policymakers often overlook Central Asia. After the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, the US improved relations with some Central Asian states due to military operations in Afghanistan. However, as US interests in Afghanistan diminished, so did engagement with the broader region. No sitting US president has ever visited Central Asia and only a handful of Cabinet-level visits have taken place. This lack of high-level attention signals a broader disengagement, which could undermine US strategic interests.

Another issue is America's approach to the region, which often prioritizes human rights and democratization over other critical matters, such as security, counterterrorism, energy and trade. While these values are essential, a balanced strategy is necessary to foster broader regional cooperation. The overemphasis on political reform has often alienated Central Asian governments, resulting in a lopsided relationship that fails to address mutual strategic interests effectively. In today's era of great power competition, crafting a coherent US strategy for Central Asia is vital. The last US strategy for the region, published in February 2020, emerged during Trump's first term. Though initially well-regarded, it is now outdated. The 2020 strategy focused on Afghanistan's role in regional dynamics, an approach less relevant now since the US withdrawal and the Taliban's return to power. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine have reshaped geopolitical and economic landscapes, requiring a reassessment of US priorities in Central Asia.

There is currently little clarity on how the next Trump administration will approach the region. During Trump's first term, key Cabinet members had considerable regional experience. Former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, previously ExxonMobil's CEO, spent significant time in Central Asia due to the energy sector. Similarly, former Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis had extensive regional knowledge from his tenure as chief of US Central Command. However, none of Trump's recent appointments have demonstrated expertise in Central Asia, leaving the administration's future approach uncertain.

However, a new strategy is anticipated next year and several key areas should be prioritized to strengthen US ties with the region. First, the US must support Central Asian states in

energy and trade.

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First, the US must support Central Asian states in

Luke Coffey

balancing their foreign policies. These nations are acutely aware of their geopolitical, economic and cultural ties with regional powers, such as Russia and China. The US should avoid framing engagement as a binary choice between the West and these powers, instead fostering relationships that acknowledge regional complexities, while promoting mutual interests. Encouraging multifaceted diplomacy will enable Central Asian countries to maintain autonomy, while engaging with all major global players.

Second, energy and transit cooperation should be central to US engagement. Ensuring Europe diversifies its energy resources is vital due to NATO obligations, while Central Asian countries seek to broaden their export markets and enhance connectivity. The US should explore opportunities for expanding oil and gas projects and developing new transit routes. Notably, supporting the Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline, which would connect Turkmenistan's vast natural gas reserves to European markets, should be a clear policy goal. Such initiatives would not only strengthen energy security for Europe, but also provide Central Asian countries with alternative trade routes, reducing their dependence on Russia and China.

Third, security cooperation must remain a priority. The US has long collaborated with Central Asian republics on counterterrorism, particularly in addressing the threat posed by regional extremists joining groups such as Daesh. For Central Asian governments, this issue is sensitive and best handled through discreet, trust-based engagement. With the US no longer present in Afghanistan, regional security concerns have intensified.

Strengthening security partnerships with Central Asian countries is crucial for countering emerging threats and maintaining regional stability.

Finally, in this era of great power competition, the US must collaborate with allies to promote shared interests in Central Asia. Recognizing the growing role of the Organization of Turkic States is essential. This grouping serves as a platform for Turkic countries, including four of the five Central Asian republics, to enhance trade, energy and political cooperation. Türkiye, a key NATO member and driving force behind the Organization of Turkic States, plays a crucial role despite current tensions with the West. Engaging with Türkiye through the organization offers an avenue for the US to pursue common goals in Central Asia, while reinforcing ties with Ankara.

To support this new strategy, the Washington administration must prioritize showing up in the region. Trump should become the first US president to visit Central Asia, sending a strong signal of commitment. In the meantime, high-level visits by US officials would symbolize renewed engagement. Cabinet-level visits could strengthen diplomatic ties and lay the groundwork for deeper cooperation.

Central Asia remains geopolitically significant to the US, as recent developments in Afghanistan have highlighted. If the US aims to compete effectively in great power competition, it cannot afford to neglect this critical region. A pragmatic, balanced relationship rooted in mutual strategic and regional interests is essential. Trump now has a unique opportunity to reshape US engagement in Central Asia and secure a stronger American presence in this pivotal region.

The silent suffering of children

Babar Zeb Khan

EARLIER last week, children in elite institutions recited promises of a brighter future for International Children's Day. Colorful balloons floated above their playgrounds and all the kids played and enjoyed in their small bubbles. Beyond these gates is a darkness, a truth too grim to celebrate. Pakistan is failing its children. The consequence is astonishing, as it should be.

For every pledge to uphold children's rights, there are stories that break us. In just six months last year, 2,227 cases of child abuse were reported. 12 children every day go through what may be the most horrifying memory of their lives. And these are just the cases we know about. Provinces like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa barely make the statistics. Why? Honor, fear, stigma, reputation, and victim blaming. Entire communities look the other way. The predators? They thrive.

But how did we get here? Let's begin with tradition. Corporal punishment, still praised by the older generation, passes as discipline. A slap in the classroom. A slap at home. Violence is normalized. Abuse is excused. Elders in our society literally glorify corporal punishment. They attribute their success to the Physical trauma they endured in childhood. This acceptance feeds a culture where children grow up thinking that pain is routine. The neurological and physiological scars endured by them have been widely confirmed by research. A study in The British Journal of

Psychology found high rates of depression in adults with childhood maltreatment, with 43% facing emotional abuse and over 25% experiencing neglect or sexual abuse. Research by the University of Essex reveals that childhood trauma disrupts neural networks which impairs emotional regulation and has long term cognitive and emotional effects.

It is, of course, not just the consequences that paint these actions tragic. The facts themselves are barbaric too. Take the case of Zainab, the seven-year-old from Kasur. She was abducted, raped, and murdered in 2018. Her death sparked outrage. Protests filled the streets. Laws were passed. The consequences to the perpetrators are always the same; the case gets swept under the rug, and the country and its people move on until the next victim and the next. Last year, Punjab alone accounted for 74% of the reported cases of child abuse. Thirty-six children-yes, thirty-six were murdered after being sexually abused. Thirty-six young lives, taken violently, left behind as evidence of our collective failure.

Kasur's name alone has become synonymous with horror. From 2006 to 2014, nearly 280 children were victimized in a large-scale abuse ring. Videos of their suffering were traded like currency. This wasn't a one-time scandal. It's a pattern. A system. A national shame.

Now, the internet adds a new layer of terror. The dark web. A place where predators trade child pornography like commodities. In the first half of this year alone, 53 cases of child

pornography were reported. These are vulnerable children between the ages of 6 and 15. Their futures are being stolen in ways we can't even imagine.

The statistics in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa seem to be low. Too low. Not because abuse doesn't happen but because victims just never come forward. They cannot come forward, they are not allowed to. They stay silent. Communities enforce that silence. Families know the result of speaking up—ostracization, threats, and shame. There is a high chance the child will get tagged with the most terrible derogatory of names (K*ni - in Pashto language, which translates to catamite). Silence, then, becomes survival. But this silence is annihilating. It protects the predators and does unimaginable harm to the victims.

Predators often get away with their abuse since they are generally people of association. 91% of abusers are people the victims know.

Relatives. Neighbors. Teachers. The very people children should trust. Abuse isn't happening in dark alleys. It's happening in homes, classrooms, and places of worship. These are not strangers. These are familiar faces. Child abuse doesn't just steal childhoods. It destroys futures. It breaks minds, bodies, and spirits. Education suffers. Mental health crumbles. For every child abused, a potential scientist, teacher, or artist is lost. So, what now? Words are not enough. Token gestures like Children's Day celebrations mean nothing if we don't act. Action is the only way forward. It starts

with education. Real education. Not just literacy, but awareness. Teach children to recognize abuse. Train parents to protect them. Make schools safe havens, not emotional battle-grounds.

The justice system, too, must uphold its duty to legally protect the children. Swift prosecutions. Severe penalties. Let every predator know they will be caught, exposed, and punished. Law enforcement agencies must do their job, not ignore victims. We need systems where reporting abuse doesn't bring fear but relief. We can think of setting a precedence here, but the precedence should be in a way that it helps not just individuals but communities and the overall social structure.

Finally, the internet. The dark web cannot be allowed to operate unchecked. Pakistan must regulate these spaces. We have examples from around the world. Examples like the "Silk Road marketplace" and "Hansa Market". These were shut down despite operating on Tor servers (dark web). Our agencies also ought to have such capabilities, I believe. The only thing required is the attention this issue needs. We should protect our children online as fiercely as we should in real life. It, surely, is possible. It is necessary. Childhood is a sacred thing. It should be a time of joy, curiosity, and dreams. Not nightmares. Not fear. Our children deserve more. So much more.

The question is simple. Will we protect them? Or will we fail them as always? The answer is obvious, I suppose!

The Roots of Bitterness and the Path to Reconciliation

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

BITTERNESS is a natural human reaction to negative experiences, often stemming from misunderstandings, unfulfilled expectations, betrayal, or perceived injustices. While it is human to feel hurt, allowing bitterness to fester can lead to a corrosive impact on one's personal life, relationships, and spiritual well-being. It creates barriers, fosters grudges, and deprives individuals of peace and contentment. Understanding why bitterness arises and how to address it effectively is crucial for a harmonious society and individual tranquility.

Bitterness often stems from unmet expectations in relationships or situations. People harbor certain hopes from others, whether in personal, professional, or societal contexts. When these expectations are not met, resentment may develop. Additionally, miscommunication or lack of communication amplifies misunderstandings, leading to emotional wounds. In many cases, the inability to forgive magnifies bitterness. Forgiveness is not about excusing a wrong but about freeing oneself from the chains of anger and resentment. Another significant factor is envy or jealousy, which can fuel feelings of bitterness when comparing one's life to others.

To reduce and eliminate bitterness, self-awareness and introspection play vital roles. Recognizing the root cause of bitterness is the first step toward healing. Open and honest communication can bridge gaps and resolve misunderstandings. Empathy is another powerful tool—understanding another person's perspective can dissolve the rigid boundaries created by bitterness. Forgiveness, both of oneself and others, is central to overcoming resentment. It is a liberating act that allows one to move forward without the burden of past grievances. Furthermore, cultivating gratitude shifts focus from negative experiences to the blessings in life, fostering positivity and reducing bitterness.

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person's perspective can dissolve the rigid boundaries created by bitterness. Forgiveness, both of oneself and others, is central to overcoming resentment. It is a liberating act that allows one to move forward without the burden of past grievances. Furthermore, cultivating gratitude shifts focus from negative experiences to the blessings in life, fostering positivity and reducing bitterness.

Islam provides profound guidance on addressing and overcoming bitterness, emphasizing forgiveness, reconciliation, and the cultivation of good character. The Quran and Hadith offer timeless wisdom that helps individuals navigate interpersonal conflicts and emotional struggles with grace and wisdom. The Quran repeatedly underscores the importance of forgiveness and forbearance. In Surah Al-A'raf (7:199), Allah advises: "Show forgiveness, enjoin what is good, and turn away from the ignorant." This verse encapsulates the essence of dealing with bitterness by advocating patience, kindness, and a forgiving attitude, even in the face of provocation.

Another relevant verse from Surah Ash-Shura (42:37) states: "...and when they are angry, they forgive." Forgiveness is presented not as a weakness but as a strength that elevates one's character and brings inner peace. Holding on to anger and bitterness is discouraged, as it burdens the soul and disrupts societal harmony. Islam recognizes that forgiveness is not always easy, but it is a path that leads to personal growth

and divine reward. In a famous Hadith, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "Do not hate one another, do not envy one another, do not turn away from one another, but rather be servants of Allah as brothers." This statement highlights the destructive nature of hatred and envy, which often fuel bitterness, and encourages believers to foster love and unity.

The Prophet's life serves as a practical example of overcoming bitterness with compassion and forgiveness. One notable instance is his treatment of the people of Makkah after the conquest. Despite years of persecution, he forgave his adversaries, declaring, "No blame will there be upon you today. May Allah forgive you; and He is the most merciful of the merciful" (Surah Yusuf, 12:92). This act of magnanimity transformed former enemies into devoted followers, illustrating the transformative power of forgiveness.

The Quran also encourages believers to respond to negativity with positivity. In Surah Fussilat (41:34), it is stated: "Repel evil by that which is better; and thereupon the one whom between you and him is enmity will become as though he was a devoted friend." This principle, known as *ihسان* (excellence in character), can break the cycle of bitterness and foster reconciliation. Bitterness is not merely an individual issue; it has societal implications. A community plagued by grudges and resentment cannot thrive. Islam emphasizes the collective well-being of society, urging its followers to resolve conflicts through dialogue and mutual understanding.

To reduce and eliminate bitterness, self-awareness and introspection play vital roles. Recognizing the root cause of bitterness is the first step toward healing. Open and honest communication can bridge gaps and resolve misunderstandings. Empathy is another powerful tool—understanding another person's perspective can dissolve the rigid boundaries created by bitterness. Forgiveness, both of oneself and others, is central to overcoming resentment. It is a liberating act that allows one to move forward without the burden of past grievances. Furthermore, cultivating gratitude shifts focus from negative experiences to the blessings in life, fostering positivity and reducing bitterness.

ing. The concept of *sulh* (reconciliation) is highly regarded, and believers are encouraged to mediate disputes and promote peace.

In practical terms, fostering an environment of justice and fairness can prevent bitterness from arising in the first place. Many grievances stem from feelings of injustice or unequal treatment. Islam's emphasis on equity, fairness, and the protection of rights ensures that such grievances are minimized. Leaders, whether in families, communities, or nations, are entrusted with the responsibility to uphold justice and prevent bitterness from festering among those under their care.

Bitterness is a complex emotion that can undermine personal happiness and societal cohesion.

It arises from unmet expectations, misunderstandings, and unresolved conflicts but can be mitigated through self-awareness, empathy, and forgiveness. Islam offers profound guidance on addressing bitterness, urging believers to embody patience, compassion, and justice. By adhering to the teachings of the Quran and the exemplary character of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), individuals and communities can transcend bitterness, fostering unity and peace. The path to eliminating bitterness requires courage, humility, and a commitment to principles that elevate the soul and enrich relationships. Through these efforts, one can achieve inner peace and contribute to a more harmonious world.

Canadian Trump fans finally got it: ‘America First’ is ‘Canada Last’

I don't know about you, but, recently, I have enjoyed watching an entertaining spasm of populist-on-populist violence.

Perhaps “violence” is too strong a word. Populist-on-populist “animus” may be a more accurate way to describe how Canada’s two leading populist charlatans have been responding to the threat made by their populist hero – American President-elect Donald Trump – to impose 25 percent tariffs on Canadian goods and services exported to the United States.

The glorious spectacle began when Ontario’s semi-coherent premier, Doug Ford, and the slightly more articulate Conservative Party leader, self-styled tough guy and would-be prime minister, Pierre Poilievre, recognised that the inevitable meaning of Trump’s xenophobic-drenched “America First” vow translated into “Canada Last”.

So the pair of pedestrian “firebrands” were suddenly obliged to hold hastily arranged press conferences to extinguish the fire from their brands while they chastised and “distanced” themselves from an irrational felon they adore and who, if he imposes the threatened tariffs come his return to the Oval Office early next year, would reportedly devastate the Ontario and Canadian economies.

The premier was the first out of the harried rhetorical gate earlier this week, delivering a 1.5-minute-long anguished reaction to Trump’s proposed tariffs.

Ford’s meandering address was resounding proof not only of his flimsy command of the

English language, but of a spurned lover’s gooeey affection for a raging populist who appears poised to “stab” America’s dearest friend, Canada.

As if to convey the gravity of what he was about to say, a pale, shak-en-looking Ford took hold of a lectern with both hands to steady himself before delivering his panic-tinged remarks.

“Last night,” Ford said, “we received the biggest threat we have ever received from our closest friend and ally [and] from President-elect Trump.”

Wow. The “biggest threat ... ever”, eh? That grade A hyperbole is sure to register with the undisputed champion of unhinged hyperbole – Donald Trump.

After that bit of nonsense, Ford launched into an unhinged diatribe of his own, saying that he was insulted that Trump had “compared” Canada to Mexico.

Ford complained that Trump’s indictment of Canada was “unfair” without, of course, explaining why it was unfair.

“I can tell you, Canada is no Mexico,” Ford said with all the faux outrage he could muster.

Gone, apparently, were the happy days when Canada, Mexico, and the US were considered the “three amigos” who applauded each other’s democratic values and commitment to unhindered trade, culminating in the much-celebrated North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) renegotiated by the aforementioned “three amigos” in 2020.

Ford and much of Canada’s amnesiac establishment press – who once giddily extolled the

Andrew Mitrovica

wonderful benefits and virtues of NAFTA – have ditched one of the “amigos” to assuage a thug turned president – again.

Oh, how fleeting supposedly cherished friendships and alliances can be.

Then, Ford got to the “heart” of the matter, so to speak.

“It’s like a family member stabbing you right in the heart,” he said.

A curious aside: One has to wonder about the psychological roots of the premier’s halting choice of imagery here.

Ford could have opted for the more palpable platitude, that Trump had “stabbed Canada in the back”. Instead, he imagined that America’s soon-to-be commander-in-chief was plunging a knife into Canada’s beating heart – metaphorically speaking.

My goodness.

Ford said he has travelled frequently to the US and no one he has encountered has ever had an issue with Canada – a country most Americans know little or nothing about other than that we share the same continent.

Take that, President-elect Trump!

Ford threw Mexico under the bus – I’m sorry, given the premier’s grating lead, I couldn’t resist the cliché – insisting that the “threat” its porous border posed to Canada and the US was “serious”.

He urged Prime Minister Justin Trudeau “to do better on our borders”.

Showing his mastery of the file, the premier suggested, incorrectly, that 197 million – yes, 197 million – undocumented “foreign nation-

als” were crossing from Canada into the US.

Well done, sir.

Predictably and painfully, Ford reminded Trump that – cliché alert – “there is no closer ally, there is no other country in the world that has stood shoulder-to-shoulder with our American ... family”.

“I am proud to stand in front of our flags, of Canada and the US,” Ford added, almost misty-eyed.

It went on like that for another 10 grovelling minutes, with the Ontario premier repeating like a metronome that while he was “insulted” by Trump’s disparaging comments and “unfair” ultimatums, Canada and the US were conjoined twins who needed one another to survive – economically speaking.

Finally, Ford agreed that despite those deep and shared patriotic ties, Canada would be obliged to retaliate if Trump makes good on his tariff gambit.

One apparently blind, easily impressed columnist praised Ford’s embarrassing performance this way: “Donald Trump’s threat of a 25-per-cent tariff ... [was] an opportunity for the Ontario premier to show leadership and he’s making the most of it. Ford’s quick response to the tariff threat ‘struck the right balance between emotion and action’.”

That’s not “leadership”, it’s pandering of the most blatant and cringe-worthy order.

Speaking of cringe-worthy pandering, Canada’s prime minister in impatient waiting, Poilievre, was more muted in his criticism of his populist-stunt mentor, Trump.

An uncharacteristical-

ly subdued Poilievre droned on for more than 20 minutes in French and English about how the brewing trade dispute between Canada and the US was Trudeau’s irresponsible fault.

All Poilievre could summon from his brimming bag of school-yard epithets was that Trump’s potentially ruinous tariff hike was “unjustified”.

Boy, that’s telling him, tough guy.

Like the lifelong, calculating politician that he is, Poilievre pivoted instantly to condemn Trudeau for being caught unaware since “President Trump had been talking about it for years on the campaign trail”.

According to Poilievre, the villain in this trade drama is not Trump – a convicted villain – but Canada’s prime minister who visited Trump at his Florida Mar-a-Lago resort on Friday to mend, pardon me, fences.

Trump should have appointed Poilievre the next US ambassador to Canada given how eager a job he has been doing carrying the bully president-elect’s water.

Poilievre spent the next several minutes recycling his, by now, standard attack lines vilifying Trudeau.

He did not direct another word of condemnation towards Trump. Rather, incredibly, he defended the president-elect.

“Look, President Trump has the right to put his workers and his nation’s security first,” the MAGA fanboy said.

Pierre Poilievre is Donald Trump’s mini-me in Canada. What a disaster both countries confront in the not-too-distant offing.

— Aljazeera

Fahad Al-Ruwaily

Recently, there has been an unprecedented wave of French firms opening regional offices in the Kingdom to strengthen and expand these partnerships.

The cooperation also extends into previously unexplored or underdeveloped sectors, spanning tourism, fintech, cybersecurity, renewable energy, telecommunications, space technology and artificial intelligence. The partnership also encompasses environmental initiatives, including biodiversity and ecosystem conservation, coral reef protection and marine habitat preservation.

While it is challenging to cover all aspects of cooperation in a brief article, taking the AI sector alone, a major breakthrough came at the Global AI Summit held in Riyadh in September, when Saudi Arabia announced partnerships with 40 leading French AI companies. Operating under the National Industry Development and Logistics Program, these collaborations encompass knowledge transfer, qualification programs, startup support and joint venture funding.

This builds on the memorandums of understanding signed during Macron’s December 2021 visit to Saudi Arabia, which laid the groundwork for institutional, economic and scientific cooperation in emerging technologies, AI and digital innovation. The Kingdom’s leadership strongly supports this sector, which has become fundamental to sustainable development within the Fourth Industrial Revolution. According to reports from the Saudi Data and Artificial Intelligence Authority, AI and data are linked to approximately 70 percent of the Vision 2030 targets.

Another significant milestone was reached in September, when Saudi Arabia, UNESCO and the International Center for Artificial Intelligence Research and Ethics signed a tripartite agreement. This established ICAIRE’s Riyadh office as a Category 2 Center under UNESCO’s auspices.

The Kingdom ranks among the world’s fastest-advancing nations in this field. It now ranks 14th globally in the Government AI Readiness Index, holds seventh place in AI trade metrics and leads the Arab world among the 83 nations evaluated. Looking ahead, Saudi Arabia will participate in the AI Action Summit in Paris next February, which will be hosted by President Macron. According to the Elysee Palace, the summit will address critical issues including AI’s environmental impact, sustainability and the establishment of comprehensive global governance frameworks.

This visit takes on exceptional significance against the backdrop of current regional and international circumstances. At the forefront is the ongoing Gaza conflict, where civilian casualties continue to mount and Israeli military operations persist, while ceasefire negotiations remain deadlocked and humanitarian aid access faces significant challenges. Both countries have pledged to redouble their diplomatic efforts to address these urgent concerns.

In the Lebanese context, international diplomatic efforts, supported by both Saudi Arabia and France, have culminated in securing a ceasefire agreement, which both nations herald as a potential stepping stone toward Lebanon’s long-term stability, sovereignty and security. The partnership extends beyond diplomacy to humanitarian action, relief assistance, and medical support to the Lebanese people.

Building on commitments made during President Macron’s December 2021 visit to Riyadh, the two governments have established a joint humanitarian fund targeting Lebanon’s pressing needs, so as to help the Lebanese population as they navigate through their current crisis.

The two countries’ governments cooperate through close consultations in regard to regional and international issues of common interest. These consultations go beyond the regional scope to tackle topics such as the Russia-Ukraine war, which both countries are exerting extensive efforts to end. They are also promoting cooperation at the multilateral level, both with other countries and within international bodies to address global challenges that require such cooperation.

This includes the interna-

tional cooperation efforts aimed at fighting terrorism, extremist ideology and discriminatory and hateful thoughts, along with preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and addressing climate change and its repercussions that lead to drought, water scarcity and the spread of desertification. In this context, the visit will coincide with the co-organized One Water Summit and the COP16 conference to combat desertification.

This reflects one aspect of the two countries’ cooperation in the important area of addressing climate change and its repercussions, as the Kingdom was at the forefront of the countries that took part in the negotiations and signed the 2015 Paris Agreement. Additionally, the two countries cooperate at various bilateral and multilateral levels in this regard through the G20, of which they are both members, and the Paris-based Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, with which the Kingdom signed a memorandum of understanding for strategic partnership during the Davos forum.

The agreement includes boosting cooperation between the two parties in several fields, including the economy, governance and sustainability, in addition to cooperating through other international organizations, most notably the UN and its relevant agencies. Along with the government’s efforts, we also see the private sector contributing to this aspect by forging partnerships and exchanging expertise.

Macron’s visit also coincides with significant events and developments. The most notable of these was perhaps King Salman’s inauguration of the Riyadh Metro network last week. This is the largest metro network built in a single phase in the world, thus realizing the project presented by King Salman as a vital target back when he was still the governor of Riyadh and head of the High Commission for the Development of Arriyadh. The network’s construction saw a significant presence from French partners and French engineers with extensive expertise in the field, as the Paris Metro is considered one of the oldest, most efficient and most famous networks in the world.

The ancient region of AIUla in northern Saudi Arabia stands as another remarkable example of Saudi-French partnership, showcasing collaborative expertise in culture, archaeology, construction, tourism and hospitality. The success of this partnership, formalized in a 2018 bilateral agreement, was celebrated at a high-level ministerial meeting held in Paris last month.

The Saudi-French Ministerial Committee’s second session praised the extensive level of cooperation achieved across multiple sectors, particularly in regard to culture and professional development, while discussing current and future major projects. Among the lauded developments was Villa Hegra, a joint Saudi-French cultural institution dedicated to the arts and culture of both nations. The archaeological program has proven particularly fruitful, drawing 150 French archaeologists and researchers to the site since 2018. The partnership between the Royal Commission for AIUla and Paris I Pantheon-Sorbonne University was another to receive recognition.

French corporate involvement in the region’s development was also commended. Alstom is spearheading the development of AIUla’s tram system, while the Sharaan Resort, designed by the celebrated French architect Jean Nouvel, is taking shape under the expertise of Bouygues Group. The ministerial meeting was accompanied by a major business forum that brought together some of the heads of the largest Saudi companies and their French counterparts, who are concerned with the partnership between the two countries. They had the pleasure of being received by President Macron at the Elysee Palace in the presence of the Saudi minister of investment and his French counterpart.

I wish President Macron and his accompanying delegation the best as they enjoy a pleasant stay in the Kingdom and a successful visit that will contribute to strengthening the two countries’ friendship and partnership. As we say in Saudi Arabia, “Ahlam wa sahan bikum” (welcome).

— Arab News

It’s time to tax fossil fuels and shipped goods to fund climate resilience

A few days after the UN Climate Change Conference in Baku concluded, I reflected on the consequences of Hurricane Beryl ripping through the Caribbean five months ago. In its wake, Grenada, which was left devastated, triggered a hurricane clause allowing it to pause debt servicing for a few years.

This provided much-needed liquidity at a scale, pace and lower interest rates than any other instrument.

These clauses are a necessary antidote to retreating insurers as hurricanes become more frequent and devastating due to climate change. Ultimately, the saved debt service will have to be paid back, not at emergency rates and at a later, better time, but it is not free.

Developing countries particularly vulnerable to climate change, and which bear little responsibility for it, are paying more than \$100bn in climate-related loss and damage per year and sinking under oceans of debt before the sea levels rise. But who else would pay?

How could any international scheme to raise contributions from those more able to pay and responsible for climate change be enforced? Wouldn’t consumers or producers balk at the cost, making it politically impossible? Electorates increasingly vote for politicians who want to erect walls against foreigners, not fund them.

We have been led to believe that international levies to fund loss and damage are the pipe dreams of idealists. But this is an erroneous version of history. An exciting part of that history is when, on docking in Singapore in July 1967, the crew of oil tanker Lake Palourde let onboard Anthony O’Connor, a young lawyer from the firm of Drew & Napier, believ-

ing he was an Irish whiskey salesman. O’Connor then pinned a writ from the United Kingdom government to the mast seeking compensation for the damage caused when the Lake

Avinash Persaud

waited 30 years after the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro for the new Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage is that the international community

price for a barrel of oil more than 5 percent every month.

Greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere are an equally dangerous form of pollution. Last year, at its annual general

ultra-low emissions, could raise up to \$50bn per year to finance the new Fund for responding to climate-related loss and damage in particularly vulnerable developing countries.

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The United States Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund is even bigger. It raises nine cents on every barrel of oil produced in or imported into the US. The Fund now has \$8bn. This 0.1 percent levy goes unnoticed by consumers and producers in the face of swings in the

meeting, members of the International Maritime Organization committed themselves to the early decarbonisation of the sector. But that does not go far enough.

The oil, gas and coal sectors are responsible for about half of current greenhouse gas emissions, and the high-emission products of agriculture, industrial, and manufacturing sectors contribute most of the rest. All are shipped. Almost 90 percent of the \$25 trillion of goods transported yearly go by sea.

Ministers will need to take the lead as the shipping industry is unlikely to levy its customers itself. Still, just a 0.2 percent levy on the value of fossil fuels and goods transported with penalties for under-recording and exemptions for goods produced with

The levy cannot fall heavily on developing countries that contributed so little to global warming. Long has the precedent been set that owners and importers are responsible for the environmental risks of what is being shipped.

International mechanisms exist, and sizeable monies are raised daily – just not yet for climate-related loss and damage. Multilateral development banks should use their new lending headroom to lend more cheaply and longer term to help vulnerable countries build lasting resilience.

However, if vulnerable countries are not to sink under oceans of debt, they also need new international levies to cover loss and damage. What are we waiting for? A category five hurricane in the English Channel?

PSX stays bullish, gains 1,917 more points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bullish trend on Monday, gaining 1,917.63 points more points, a positive change of 1.89 percent, closing at 103,274.95 points as compared to 101,357.32 points on the last trading day.

A total of 1,556,252,523 shares were traded during the day as compared to 915,509,804 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs47.097billion against Rs35.978 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 462 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 339 of them recorded gains and 85 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 38 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 213,514,857 shares at Rs1.46 per share, Nergycio PK with 196,907,321 shares at Rs5.72 per share and Fauji Foods Limited with 68,325,507 shares at Rs13.62 per share.

Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs270.00 per share price, closing at Rs19,800.01, whereas the runner-up was Services Industries Limited with Rs134.94 rise in its per share price to Rs1,484.30.

Ismail Industries Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs38.28 per share closing at Rs1,599.82 followed by Pakistan Tobacco Company Limited with Rs20.23 decline to close at Rs1,214.96.

Gold prices dip Rs1,700 per tola: The price of 24 karat per tola gold decreased by Rs1,700 and was sold at Rs274,500

on Monday against its sale at Rs276,200, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also went down by Rs1,457 to Rs235,340 from Rs236,797 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat gold decreased to Rs215,728 from Rs217,064.

The price of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs3,400 and Rs2,914.95, respectively.

The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$17 to \$2,633 from \$2,650, the Association reported.

PPL discovers hydrocarbons at Pateji X-1



F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL) has achieved another significant milestone with a second major gas and condensate discovery at its exploratory well, Pateji X-1, in the Shah Bandar Block, District Sujawal,

Sindh. This marks the fourth consecutive hydrocarbon discovery in the block operated by PPL, which holds a 63 percent working interest (WI) alongside joint venture partners Mari Petroleum Company Limited (32 percent WI), Sindh Energy Holding Company Limited,

and Government Holdings (Private) Limited (2.5 percent WI each).

Following the initial discovery from the Upper Sand (D-Sand) reservoir, further testing of the Upper Sands in the Lower Goru Formation confirmed a promising hydrocarbon zone. Drilling results and wireline log data led to testing, yielding an impressive flow rate of 12.4 MMscfd gas and 196 bbl/d condensate at 2,551 psig wellhead pressure on a 32/64" choke from the C-Sand reservoir. Pateji X-1 was spud on October 11, 2024, after detailed geological and geophysical evaluations and was drilled to a depth of 2,475 meters to explore the potential of the Lower Goru Formation.

These successive discoveries highlight PPL's technical expertise and dedication to enhancing Pakistan's energy security. The new reserves will boost the country's hydrocarbon base, reduce reliance on costly energy imports, and save valuable foreign exchange."

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Seven ships, MSC Positano, Cussler, SM Falcon, Tsukuba Galaxy, Al Jasra, Energy Centaur and Al-Diab-II carrying Container, Palm oil, Chemicals, LNG, Gas oil and LPG, berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal, Liquid Cargo Terminal, Engro Vopak Terminal, Engro Elengy Terminal, FOTCO oil Terminal and Sui Southern Gas Terminal respectively on Sunday.

Meanwhile another containers ship 'MSC Silvana-VIII' also arrived at outer anchorage on today

Morning. Twelve ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two ships, MSC Positano and Milaha Qatar left the port on today morning, while six more ships, Tsukuba Galaxy, Al-Diab-II, SM Falcon, Energy Centarus, Abdullah-M and Cussler are expected to sail on today afternoon.

Cargo volume of 241,500 tonnes, comprising 213,448 tonnes imports cargo and 28,052 tonnes export cargo carried in 4,250 Containers (3,242 TEUs Imports & 1,008 TEUs Export) was

handled at the port during last 24 hours.

Thirteen ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them five ships, MSC Silavana-VIII, Manticores, DM Bea, Ioloas and Pacific ERA scheduled to load/offload Container, Rice, Palm oil, Coal and Mogas are expected to take berths at QICT, MW-2, LCT, PIBT and FOTCO respectively on today Monday, while two more container ships, Maersk Newark and Cap Andreas are due to arrive at port on Tuesday.

Pakistani rupee gains 08 pasia against US dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani rupee on Monday appreciated by 08 pasia against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 277.97 against the previous day's closing of Rs 278.05.

However, according to the Forex Association of

Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 277.60 and Rs 279 respectively.

The price of Euro decreased by Rs 2 to close at Rs 291.99 against the last day's closing of Rs 293.99, according to the State Bank

of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs 1.85, whereas a decrease of 79 pasia was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs 352.70 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs 353.49.

Pakistan's regional exports increased

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's exports to the seven regional countries increased by 4.09 per cent in the first four months of the current fiscal year (2024-25) compared to the corresponding months of last year.

The country's exports to the regional countries including Afghanistan, China, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, and the Maldives account for a small amount of \$1506.131 million, which is 14.33 per cent of Pakistan's overall exports of \$10,507 billion during July-October (2024-25), State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) reported.

China tops the list of countries in terms of Pakistan's exports to its neighbouring, leaving behind other countries such as Afghanistan and Bangladesh.

Pakistan carried out its border trade with farther neighbour Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, and Maldives.

Pakistan's exports to China witnessed a decrease of 14.58 per cent from \$952.385 million last year to \$813.441 million during last year whereas exports to Afghanistan surged to \$291.773 million from \$182.616 million.

The country's exports to Bangladesh also increased by 28.60 per cent to \$247.313 million this year from \$192.311 million whereas exports to Sri Lanka rose by 29.22 per cent to \$148.937 million from \$115.256.

The exports to Nepal decreased to \$0.742 million from \$1.138 million in the previous year while to Maldives increased by 47.71 per cent to \$1.746 million from \$1.182 million, it added.

Pakistan exports to Maldives increased by 11.57 per cent to \$3.451 million from \$3.093 million while exports to India increased to \$0.374 million from \$0.069 million, it added.

On the other hand, the imports from seven regional countries were recorded at \$5226.807 million during the months under review as compared to \$3855.115 million during last year, showing an increase of 35.58 per cent.

The imports from China during July-October 2024-25 were recorded at \$5096.881 million against the \$3737.618 million during July-October 2023-24, showing an increase of 36.36 per cent.



ISLAMABAD: Costermongers busy selling bundles of vitamin-packed citrus fruits as seasonal surge fills markets with fresh harvests, marking arrival of winter in Federal Capital.

Core inflation decelerates to 4.9 per cent in November

ISLAMABAD (APP): The core inflation measured by Consumer Price Index (CPI) decelerated further to 4.9 percent during November 2024 as compared to 7.2 percent recorded during October 2024, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported Monday.

According to PBS data, the CPI based inflation during the same month of last year (November 2023) was recorded at 29.2%.

On month-on-month basis, it increased by 0.5% in November 2024 as compared to an increase of 1.2% in the previous month and an increase of 2.7% in November 2023.

"Pakistan Inflation as measured by CPI has made another multi-year low," commented Advisor to Finance Minister on Economic and Financial reforms Khurram Schehzad on X.

He said, the inflation was lowest in 6.5 years, impacts common man,

businesses and government fiscal status.

He expressed the hope that such a low pace of inflation would result in more monetary easing, leading to further decline in cost of capital for businesses and industries and higher savings on debt servicing for the government resulting in improved fiscal balance in the coming months.

According to PBS data, CPI inflation Urban, decreased to 5.2% on year-on-year basis in November 2024 as compared to the 9.3% in the previous month and 30.4% in November 2023.

On month-on-month basis, it increased by 0.5% in November 2024 as compared to an increase of 1.1% in the previous month and an increase of 4.3% in November 2023.

CPI inflation Rural, increased by 4.3% on year-on-year basis in November 2024 as compared to 4.2% in the previous month and 27.5% in November 2023.

On month-on-month basis, it increased by 0.5% in November 2024 as compared to an increase of 1.5% in the previous month and an increase of 0.4% in November 2023.

The Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI) inflation on YoY decreased to 7.3% in November 2024 as compared to 9.7% a month earlier and 30.6% in November 2023.

On MoM basis, it increased by 1.0% in November 2024 as compared to an increase of 0.6% a month earlier and an increase of 3.3% in November 2023.

The Wholesale Price Index (WPI) inflation on YoY basis decreased to 2.3% in November 2024 as compared to 3.9% a month earlier and an increase of 26.4% in November 2023.

On MoM basis, it decreased by 0.1% in November 2024 as compared to a no change in the previous month and an increase of 1.4% in corresponding month of last year i.e. November 2023.

sponding month of last year i.e. November 2023.

The urban core inflation (NFNE), measured by non-food non-energy increased to 8.9% on (YoY) basis in November 2024 as compared to 8.6% in the previous month and 18.6% in November 2023. On (MoM) basis, it increased by 1.2% in November 2024 as compared to an increase of 0.6% in previous month and an increase of 0.9% in corresponding month of last year i.e. November, 2023.

The rural core inflation, measured by non-food non-energy Rural decreased to 10.9% on (YoY) basis in November 2024 as compared to 11.7% in the previous month and 25.9% in November 2023.

On (MoM) basis, it remained unchanged at 0.7% in November 2024 as compared to previous month and an increase of 1.4% in corresponding month of last year i.e. November 2023.

Asian stocks rise after China data, Paris equities and euro sink

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Markets rose across Asia on Monday with traders cheered by healthy Chinese data, while the euro and Paris stocks tumbled as a budget standoff in France fuelled concerns about the eurozone's second-biggest economy.

Traders began the month on the front foot after a rollercoaster ride since Donald Trump's re-election and warning that he will hit China, Canada and Mexico with hefty tariffs.

They took their cue from New York, where the Dow and S&P 500 both ended at record highs in a holiday-shortened session.

Hong Kong and Shanghai were among the best performers after data showed Chinese manufacturing activity expanded at a faster clip than expected in November.

The purchasing managers index figures provided some hope that the world's number-two economy was turning a corner

after a long-running slowdown, with analysts pointing to a raft of support measures unveiled at the end of September.

"The last two months of PMI data offered early signs of green shoots following the recent policy pivot and subsequent stimulus programmes," said Anna Zhou and Helen Qiao at Bank of America Global Research.

"We expect policymakers to step up easing measures next year, including the continuation of the equipment upgrade and consumer goods subsidy programmes, which should help support the manufacturing sector amid deteriorating external demand."

Some commentators also pointed to optimism that Trump could take a more pragmatic approach to tariffs, with Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum saying after a phone call with the Republican: "There will not

be a potential tariff war."

Still, investors were keeping a wary eye on developments as the US president-elect puts his cabinet together.

"Advanced Northeast Asian economies consistently run merchandise trade surpluses with the US," said analysts at Moody's Analytics.

"While falling short of China's \$280 billion surplus with the US, or the EU's \$207 billion surplus, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan each run surpluses large enough to notice, putting them in the firing line of new tariffs."

There were also gains on Monday in Sydney, Mumbai, Singapore, Taipei, Manila and Bangkok.

Tokyo rose as the yen held recent gains around 150 per dollar, as bets increase on a Bank of Japan interest rate hike after last week's forecast-topping Tokyo inflation report.

BoJ Governor Kazuo

Ueda said in an interview with the Nikkei published Sunday that increases were "nearing in the sense that economic data are on track".

Paris stocks shed more than one percent and the euro sat around 14-month lows on concerns about France's budget standoff.

Prime Minister Michel Barnier faces the risk of being deposed by a hostile National Assembly as his government presents a social security financing plan Monday that has the opposition up in arms.

Far-right leader Marine Le Pen said in a Sunday newspaper that her party would not necessarily vote to topple Barnier's government -- so long as he agreed to negotiate.

Le Pen's parliamentary bloc holds the key to the survival of the minority centre-right administration and in an interview with La Tribune Dimanche, she insisted her position was to "remain constructive".

Bank Alfalah won third consecutive 'Digital Excellence' and 'Best Bank for Customer Engagement' at Pakistan Banking Awards 2024

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Bank Alfalah, a leading commercial bank in Pakistan, has been honoured by Pakistan Banking Awards (PBA) with two prestigious accolades: the 'Best Bank for Digital Excellence' award for the third consecutive year and 'Best Bank for Customer Engagement' award for the sixth year.

Bank Alfalah has been recognised for its pursuit of

innovation and dedication to transforming its customers' banking experience. The accolade signifies that the Bank has been serving its customers innovatively through digital banking channels, products, and services.

The Bank recently relaunched the New Alfa application, purposely curated to promote financial inclusion by departing from a mere transactional banking app and moving to a

digital financial lifestyle app. People can now experience Alfa's advanced new features of savings, investment, and borrowings across a wide range of choices, alongside its new user interface design, which integrates banking into people's lifestyles.

Bank Alfalah also launched Pakistan's first digital, instant-processing Cheque Deposit Kiosk (CDK), enabling 24/7 real-time cheque clearing. Using technologies like OCR, biometrics, and machine learning, the CDK automates cheque processing, reducing manual transactions. Small businesses accustomed to using the bank's Cash Deposit Machines are expected to transition to the CDK, which handles over PKR 500 billion in annual transactions.

Bank Alfalah has also been awarded the 'Best Bank for Customer Engagement' for the sixth time since 2016. This recogni-

tion highlights the Bank's role in being the most efficient in engaging with customers with wide-ranging solutions, providing easy accessibility, providing the most efficient service delivery, and solving problems. Leveraging customer insights and innovative channels like WhatsApp Banking, Bank Alfalah ensures convenience, personalised experiences, and long-term satisfaction for its valued customers.

Speaking on this auspicious occasion, Atif Bajwa, President and CEO of Bank Alfalah, said, "We are honoured to receive these two distinguished awards at the Pakistan Banking Awards 2024. Being named the 'Best Bank Digital in Excellence' award winner for the third consecutive year highlights our relentless pursuit of empowering customers with secure, seamless, and technology-driven solutions that redefine financial convenience in Pakistan's rapidly

evolving digital banking ecosystem.

At the same time, receiving our 'Best Bank for Customer Engagement' award demonstrates our dedication to customer-centricity. Customer engagement has always been a cornerstone of our strategy, enabling us to build meaningful relationships through personalised experiences and innovative solutions.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude and congratulations to our dedicated teams, whose unwavering commitment and consistent hard work over the years, always keeping our customers in mind, have made these accolades possible."

Bank Alfalah's recognition at the Pakistan Banking Awards 2024 showcases its dedication to pioneering advancements in digital



banking and enhancing customer engagement. The Bank is shaping a dynamic and technology-driven future by championing digital innovation and embedding customer-centricity at its core. Its progressive approach paves the way for a more inclusive and responsive banking experience.

Bank Alfalah is a leading commercial bank in Pakistan, with over 1,000 branches across 200 cities and an international presence in the UAE, Bahrain, and Afghanistan. Its heritage and prominence extend over 25 successful years, highlighted by

achievements that reflect exponential growth in the country's financial sector.

The Bank offers various products and services to private-sector institutions and governments, including corporate and investment banking, consumer banking, securities brokerage, commercial, small and medium enterprises, agricultural, Islamic, and asset financing.

The Bank has established itself as a premier digital bank by introducing various features on its banking app, such as Alfamall, Buy Now Pay Later, and Term Deposit Receipts. It has also launched Pakistan's first digital lifestyle branch.

Over the last three years, Bank Alfalah has been recognised with multiple accolades, including being named a leading 'Digital Bank' and a distinguished Bank in 'House Financing' and 'Customer Franchise', highlighting its commitment to simplifying and improving customers' financial capabilities. Bank Alfalah is also ranked among the top 10 companies on the Pakistan Stock Exchange and recognised as the 'Most Inclusive Organisation' by Global Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Benchmarks.

Bank Alfalah's commitment to social responsibility remains steadfast.

وراثت نامہ

یہ کہ صاحب شاد (مرحوم) ولد قائل شاد (مرحوم) ، نمبر 764 زمین (1 کال 10 مرلہ) واقعہ گنگی نمبر 2 ملا کٹر حیر نامہ راغ روڈ پشاور کمال قانونی مقبض مالک تھے۔ مرحوم کے مندرجہ ذیل ورثاء (بیٹے و بیٹیاں) ہیں۔
محمد شاد، احمد شاد، مراد، جہانگیر شاد، ابراہیم شاد، میمن۔
اس کے علاوہ صاحب شاد مرحوم کا کوئی وارث نہیں ہے۔ اگر کسی کو کسی قسم کا کوئی اعتراض ہو تو 15 یوم میں رابطہ کریں۔
علاوہ مذکورہ کوئی دعویٰ قبول نہیں کیا جائیگا۔
از طرف: احمد شاد ولد صاحب شاد (مرحوم)



In brief

Pak to face BD in T20 Blind Cricket WC final

MULTAN (APP): The grand finale of the 4th T20 Blind Cricket World Cup, organized by the Pakistan Blind Cricket Council, will take place between Pakistan and Bangladesh on Tuesday at the Multan Cricket Stadium. Both teams underwent rigorous practice sessions ahead of the final. Pakistan's captain, Nisar Ali, expressed confidence in his side saying: "Our team has been undefeated throughout the tournament. The players are 100 percent fit, their morale is high, and we are determined to gift the nation a World Cup victory." Bangladesh captain Arif Ullah acknowledged Pakistan's strength in batting, bowling, and fielding but emphasized his team's readiness, promising to play competitive cricket in the final. The final match is scheduled for Tuesday, Dec 3, at 10:00 AM at the Multan Cricket Stadium.

Pakistan grabs third position

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan weightlifting team displayed exceptional talent at the Far East Cup 2024 in Sakhalin, Russia, securing an overall third position in the event. According to information received here on Monday, Pakistan lifts lifted above their weight to claim third position. Hanzala Dastgir Butt (WAPDA) won a bronze medal in the 109 kg category, while Haider Sultan (Pakistan Army) also bagged bronze medal in the 61kg category. Young weightlifter Haider Shakeeb clinched silver medal in the under-15 (96 kg) category, showcasing his immense potential. The Far East Cup 2024 featured teams from Pakistan, China, Japan, North Korea, South Korea, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and Malaysia. The impressive performance of Pakistan athletes highlighted the country's weightlifting potential on the global stage.

Italy to host Davis Cup Final

LONDON (APP): Italy will host the Davis Cup Final 8 from 2025 to 2027, the International Tennis Federation announced on Monday. The eight-team men's event was won this year by Jannik Sinner's Italy, who triumphed in Spain last month. Malaga has hosted the event since 2022. "We are delighted to partner with the FITP (Italian tennis federation) for the Davis Cup Final 8," said ITF president David Haggerty. "Italy has a rich history in tennis and a proven ability to host world-class sporting events." The 2025 tournament will be staged in Bologna. Angelo Binaghi, president of the FITP, said: "We are thrilled to have been selected as hosts and look forward to welcoming the best teams in the world to our country next November and for the next three years." The ITF also announced the draw for the first round of the 2025 Davis Cup qualifiers on Monday. Italy receive a wild card to the Final 8, while 2024 runners-up the Netherlands will not be involved until the second round. The first round will feature 26 teams competing in 13 ties on either Friday, January 31, 2025 to Saturday February 1, or February 1 to February 2. Each tie consists of two singles matches on day one, and a doubles match followed by two singles matches on day two.



MULTAN: Men athletes participate in the thrilling 400-meter Relay race competition during the last day of the 52nd National Athletics Championship 2024 at Ayub Stadium. —APP Photo

Zalmi Foundation launches Women's Cricket League

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Zalmi Foundation is proud to announce the launch of the Zalmi Women Cricket League (ZWL), Pakistan's first-ever women's cricket. This groundbreaking initiative, in collaboration with Ufone 4G, is a significant step towards promoting gender equality and empowering women in sports and fulfills Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 of Gender Equality.

The Zalmi Women League reflects Peshawar Zalmi's unwavering commitment to creating impactful opportunities for youth, breaking barriers, and fostering an inclusive sports culture in KP. Over the years, Zalmi Foundation - the CSR wing of Peshawar Zalmi has been at the forefront of youth empowerment, education and healthcare initiatives. The launch of the ZWL adds another historic chapter to its legacy.

Chairman Peshawar Zalmi & Zalmi Foundation Mr. Javed Afridi Quote Joining this transformative journey is Ufone 4G, renowned for

ZALMI WOMEN LEAGUE			
TOURNAMENT SCHEDULE			
MATCHES	TEAMS	DATE	TIME
GROUP STAGE			
MATCH 1	BANNU RENEGADES VS HAZARA DAFFODILS	1000	1:00 PM
MATCH 2	PESHAWAR THUNDERBOLTS VS MARDAN MAVERICKS	1000	1:00 PM
MATCH 3	PESHAWAR ALL STARS VS HAZARA DAFFODILS	1000	1:00 PM
MATCH 4	DI KHAN ROYALS VS KOHAT TITANS	1000	1:00 PM
MATCH 5	PESHAWAR ALL STARS VS MALAKAND STRIKERS	1000	1:00 PM
MATCH 6	PESHAWAR THUNDERBOLTS VS KOHAT TITANS	1000	1:00 PM
MATCH 7	HAZARA DAFFODILS VS BANNU RENEGADES	1000	1:00 PM
MATCH 8	MARDAN MAVERICKS VS DI KHAN ROYALS	1000	1:00 PM
MATCH 9	PESHAWAR ALL STARS VS BANNU RENEGADES	1000	1:00 PM
MATCH 10	PESHAWAR THUNDERBOLTS VS DI KHAN ROYALS	1000	1:00 PM
MATCH 11	HAZARA DAFFODILS VS MALAKAND STRIKERS	1000	1:00 PM
MATCH 12	KOHAT TITANS VS MARDAN MAVERICKS	1000	1:00 PM
SEMI FINALS			
MATCH 13	GROUP A WINNER VS GROUP B RUNNER UP	1000	1:00 PM
MATCH 14	GROUP C WINNER VS GROUP D RUNNER UP	1000	1:00 PM
FINAL			
MATCH 15	SEMI FINAL 1 WINNER VS SEMI FINAL 2 WINNER	1000	1:00 PM

its support of inclusive and impactful initiatives aimed at addressing key socio-economic issues as well as providing opportunities to deserving people. The league will feature eight teams, divided into two groups of four:

Group A

Peshawar Thunderbolts

DI Khan Royals
Kohat Titans
Mardan Mavericks

Group B

Peshawar All Stars
Bannu Renegades
Hazara Daffodils
Malakand Strikers

The top two teams from each group will advance to the knockout stage

playing 2 semi-finals followed by an exciting final match to crown the inaugural champion.

Earlier, Peshawar Zalmi signed an MoU with the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, ensuring full support for the Zalmi Women League. Speaking on behalf of the provincial government, Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur pledged assistance in providing state-of-the-art facilities, infrastructure and resources to ensure the league's success.

The Zalmi Women League is scheduled to take place from December 3 to December 7, 2024, at the Hayatabad Sports Complex, Peshawar. The league promises thrilling matches, opportunities for young athletes to shine, and a powerful message of women empowerment that will resonate across Pakistan and beyond.

With this initiative, Peshawar Zalmi aims to set a precedent for women participation in sports in the country, showcasing the potential of female athletes and redefining the future of cricket in Pakistan.

Shahzaib, Riazullah hit centuries in Pakistan U19 win over UAE

DUBAI (APP): Opener Shahzaib Khan continued his purple patch with the bat, recording his second successive century to guide Pakistan U19 to a comfortable 69-run victory over the United Arab Emirates U19 in a Group-A match of the ACC Men's U19 Asia Cup at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium on Monday.

The UAE were also punished by No.3 batter Muhammad Riazullah, as Pakistan U19 amassed 314 for three in the allotted 50 overs after being sent into bat. Later in the afternoon, fast bowler Abdul Subhan delivered a player of the match performance, decimating the middle-order with exceptional figures of 10-0-57-6. His spell saw the home side collapse from 170 for three to finish at 245 for eight.

Shahzaib, who had scored 159 against India on Saturday, smashed 11 fours and six sixes in a 136-ball 132. Riazullah was equally impressive, hitting nine

fours and three sixes in a well-crafted 91-ball 106.

Shahzaib and Riazullah put on 183 runs for the second wicket in just over 27 overs. Their partnership followed a strong 94-run opening stand between Shahzaib and Usman Khan (41). After Shahzaib was dismissed on the final delivery of the 46th over, Riazullah added 37 runs in the last four overs with Faham-ul-Haq (20 not out).

Chasing a stiff target, the UAE stumbled to 57 for three before Ethan D'Souza and Muhammad Rayan stitched together a 113-run partnership for the fourth wicket. However, Rayan's departure at 170 marked the end of UAE's resistance, as they eventually finished at 245 for eight. D'Souza, the seventh batter to be dismissed, scored a 102-ball 84 with 11 fours, while Rayan contributed 50 off 66 balls, including three sixes and one four.

The victory places Pakistan atop Group-A, fol-

lowed by the UAE, India and Japan. In Group-B, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh have won two matches each, while Afghanistan and Nepal remain winless. The top two sides from each group will progress to the semifinals.

Pakistan will face Japan in their final league match on Wednesday at the Dubai International Sports Stadium.

Scores in brief:

Pakistan U19 beat UAE U19 by 69 runs, Dubai International Cricket Stadium

Pakistan U19 314-3, 50 overs (Shahzaib Khan 132, Muhammad Riazullah 106, Usman Khan 41; Noorullah Ayobi 2-68)

UAE U19 245-8, 50 overs (Ethan D'Souza 84, Muhammad Rayan 50, Uddish Suri 29 not out, Aryan Saxena 24; Abdul Subhan 6-57, Mohammad Ahmed 2-45)

Player of the match: Abdul Subhan (Pakistan U19)

Army excels with 17 gold medals in National Games

MULTAN (APP): Pakistan Army athletes clinched the top position with 39 medals including seventeen (17) gold medals in the four days long 52nd national games 2024 concluded in Multan on Monday.

The marvellous skill and proficiency demonstrated by army athletes won them 17 gold medals, 12 silver and 10 bronze medals. Wapda athletes secured runner up spot for their team with six gold medals, and seven silver medals while Higher Education Commission (HEC) won the third pedestal with two silver medals. However, Wapda female athletes' squad

stood out with eight (8) gold medals, eleven (11) silver medals and eight (8) bronze medals. HEC women athletes won five (5) gold medals, six (6) silver medals and five (5) bronze medals.

Pakistan Army women squad bagged eight (8) gold medals, four (4) silver medals and two (2) bronze medals.

Earlier, athletes demonstrated their proficiency in pole vault, race, hammer throw, triple jump, high jump and separate relay races for men and women.

Army athletes raced to victory in the 4x100 relay race among men while the 4x100 meter relay race

among women was won by HEC.

Uzma, an athlete from Army won gold medal in pole vault while Malika Shahzad from HEC grabbed first position in 400 meters race. Maleeha Saleem from HEC won the top spot in hammer throw while Wapda's Maira Bibi won 5000 meters race.

In men's competition, five athletes from Pakistan Army won gold medals today including Shahid Shafiq in 200 meters race, Shahbaz Majeed in triple jump, Ahmad Faraz in high jump, Shakeel Ahmad in hammer throw and Muhammad Akhtar in 5000 meters race.

Liverpool players prepared to 'go to war' for each other: Van Dijk

LONDON (APP): Virgil van Dijk says much of Liverpool's phenomenal success this season is down to the players' willingness to "go to war" for each other. Arne Slot's team have 18 wins in their 20 matches in all competitions and the captain believes the mentality within the squad is a crucial factor, just months after the departure of Jurgen Klopp. Table-topping Liverpool beat Manchester City 2-0 on Sunday to move 11 points clear of the champions in the Premier League and they are nine points ahead of their nearest challengers, Arsenal and Chelsea. "I think it was always going to be difficult to replace Jurgen for everything he did for us, as players and for the club, but he (Slot) has come in, done it his own way," said Van Dijk. "Together with the staff he started working and making sure we have the quality to improve and win games."

Tickets for Champions T20 Cup to go on sale from Thursday

RAWALPINDI (APP): The tickets for the upcoming Champions T20 Cup will go on sale from Thursday.

The event is scheduled to take place at the Pindi Cricket Stadium Rawalpindi from December 7-25, a Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) press release said on Monday.

Tickets can be purchased online from pcb.tcs.com.pk, while the physical tickets will be available for purchase at the designated TCS outlets in Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

To encourage the fans to

witness the high-quality action in the five-team Champions T20 Cup, entry to the Premium enclosures (Miran Baksh, Shoaib Akhtar, Sohail Tanvir and Yasir Arafat) has been made free for the 20 out of 22 matches. For the Qualifier, on 23 December and the final, on 25 December, the Premium enclosure tickets can be bought for PKR 100 and PKR 250, respectively.

Tickets for the VIP enclosures (Imran Khan and Javed Miandad) can be bought at rates starting from PKR 200 and 250 for single header games while

the VIP tickets for the double headers can be bought at PKR 300 and PKR 400. The VIP enclosure tickets for the final can be purchased for PKR 500.

Fans can also watch the action from the Gallery at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium, where the tickets cost from PKR 650 to 700 for the single header matches while PKR 800 for the six double headers in the tournament. For the Qualifier, the Gallery tickets will cost PKR 700 per head while the fans can buy the December 25 final tickets for the Gallery worth PKR 1,000.

Hassan and Tebogo named 'Athletes of the Year'

PARIS (APP/APP): Dutch marathon runner Sifan Hassan and Botswana sprinter Letsile Tebogo, both of whom took gold at the Paris Olympics, were named 'Athletes of the Year' by World Athletics in Monaco on Sunday.

Hassan, who also won the out-of-stadium award, was rewarded for her incredible performance in the French capital which stretched beyond the marathon and on to the track. In the space of seven days, she won two bronze medals in the 5,000 metres, having also run a heat, and the 10,000m, and a spectacular gold in the marathon when she outprinted Ethiopia's then world record holder Tigist Assefa to win by just three seconds.

"I never thought I was going to win this one," said Hassan after receiving her award in Monaco. "This year was crazy. It's not only me -- all the athletes have been amazing." Tebogo received his award after becoming the first African to be crowned Olympic champion in the 200m, crossing the line at the Stade de France in 19.46 seconds, edging out the American Kenny Bednarek and favourite Noah Lyles.

"This means a lot," said Tebogo who doubled up with the men's track award. "It's not just about the team that is around you, there are a lot of fans out there that really want us to win something great for the continent."

"It was a real surprise to hear my name because I didn't expect this."

The international athletics federation also decided to reward a number of other athletes who shone at the Olympics.

Swedish pole-vaulter Armand Duplantis won the men's field category after an unbeaten 2024, winning Olympic gold and setting

a new world record of 6.26 metres.

Ukrainian Yaroslava Mahuchikh was the winner in the women's event, after improving the old high jump world record to 2.10m at the age of just 22 and also winning Olympic gold in Paris.

In addition to Tebogo, Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone was rewarded in the track category for beating her own world record in the 400m hurdles, running 50.37 to win gold in Paris, while men's Olympic marathon champion Tamirat Tola of Ethiopia was given the out-of-stadium award.

Ethiopian steeplechaser Sembo Almayew and Italian long-jumper Mattia Furlani were given the rising star awards.

During the ceremony, a moment was taken to remember last year's men's out-of-stadium athlete of the year Kelvin Kiptum, the marathon world record-holder who died in a road traffic accident in February.

World Athletics Awards:

Women's World Athlete of the Year: Sifan Hassan (NED)

Men's World Athlete of the Year: Letsile Tebogo (BOT)

Women's track: Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone (USA)

Women's field: Yaroslava Mahuchikh (UKR)

Women's out-of-stadium: Sifan Hassan (NED)

Men's track: Letsile Tebogo (BOT)

Men's field: Armand Duplantis (SWE)

Men's out-of-stadium: Tamirat Tola (ETH)

Women's Rising Star: Sembo Almayew (ETH)

Men's Rising Star: Mattia Furlani (ITA).



LAHORE: Sports and Youth Affairs The Punjab Games Players in action during Kabaddi match playing between Punjab teams at Nishtar Sports Complex. —APP Photo



In brief

IRSA releases 100,300 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 100,300 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 44,200 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1491.67 feet and was 93.67 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 21,000 cusecs and 55,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1155.05 feet, which was 105.05 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 4,900 cusecs and 27,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 69,100, 46,600, 36,900 and 6,200 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 11,500 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 2,500 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Six died in traffic accidents

RAWALPINDI (APP): Six people died in 1,727 road traffic accidents were reported to Rescue 1122 in Rawalpindi district during the month of November. According to the details a total of 1,713 people were victims of these accidents, to whom the Emergency Rescue Service (ERS), Rawalpindi provided timely rescue services. The statistics released by the rescue service shows 741 people were seriously injured whereas 966 received minor injuries. There were 1,450 men and 263 women victims of the accidents, with an age group of 11-40 years. Usman Gujjar, the media coordinator ERS informed reached all the accidents on time while maintaining the average response time. The majority of these road traffic accidents are of car and motorcycle riders. He said that over speeding, careless driving, wrong turns, tire burst and others were among main reasons for the accidents. Usman further underlined the need for strictly following traffic rules to reduce road accidents.

Police arrest two dacoits

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have busted a dacoit gang by arresting two of active members of the gang and recovered cash Rs158,000, a stolen motorcycle, mobile phone, weapons and other items from their possession. According to a police spokesman, Race Course police held two dacoits and street criminals namely Asif and Faisal and recovered Rs158,000, a stolen motorcycle, mobile phone, weapons and other items. A case has been registered against the accused while further investigation is under process. Superintendent of Police, Potohar Nasir Nawaz said that police are making efforts to net other members of the gang.

Medical camp organized

ISLAMABAD (APP): A free medical camp on Monday organized in collaboration with Saeed International Hospital at the Central Police Office (CPO) Islamabad to improve the mental and physical health of the police officers aims to protect them from diseases. According to the details, during the camp, police officers were screened for hepatitis B, C, and HIV, and also provided with useful advice to improve their health. On the occasion, senior police officers appreciated the efforts of all the doctors and stated that Islamabad Police prioritized the physical and mental health of its officers. Such activities would continue to be organized in the future as well, they added.

Chinese govt announces scholarships programme 2025-26 for Pakistani students

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chinese government has announced scholarships programme 2025-26 for the AJK, Pakistani students to pursue their studies and conduct research in Chinese Universities. According to Higher Education Commission (HEC) the deadline to Submit Online Application is Monday 09, December 2024.

Only those applicants are considered under Chinese Government Scholarship Program 2025-26 who have already obtained a valid HAT (score obtained on or after December 09, 2022 is valid) or USAT score (score obtained on or after December 09, 2023 is valid). Applicants must submit a valid score on HEC portal

during application submission for consideration.

To submit online application on China Scholarship Council's portal under category A (agency No. 5861), please visit [Campuschina.org](https://www.csc.edu.cn/laihua) or <https://www.csc.edu.cn/laihua>.

With a view to enhance educational cooperation between China and Pakistan, the Chinese Scholarship Council, Government of China is offering Pakistani students/scholars to study and conduct research in Chinese Universities. On behalf of the Government of Pakistan, HEC is nominating agency for these scholarships in the academic year 2025-26.

China Scholarship Council (CSC), entrusted by the Ministry of

Education, People's Republic of China, is responsible for the enrollment and the administration of Chinese Government Scholarship Program. Qualified applicants can apply for scholarship for Undergraduate/Bachelors, Masters & Doctoral/PhD programs in respective field of studies.

As per eligibility criteria, applicants must be Pakistani/AJ&K national. Dual nationality holders are not eligible to apply. Applicants must be in good health. Applicants with incomplete degrees on closing date of application are not allowed to apply.

Applicants for Undergraduate/Bachelors program must have intermediate/A-level/FA-FSC (12 years) of education and be under the age of 25

at the time of application. Applicants for Masters program must have a Bachelors degree (16 years) and be under the age of 35 at the time of application.

Applicants for PhD/Doctoral program must have a Masters degree MS/MPhil and be under the age of 40 years at the time of application. Meet the application requirement as prescribed on China Scholarship Council website & portal. Meet the admission requirements of the applied universities in terms of academic eligibility, language proficiency and other relevant criteria. Applicants may not be in receipt of any other types of scholarship currently.

All applicants are required to provide HAT or Usat score (HAT

for masters/phd and USAT for undergraduate)?. Applicants must have obtained a minimum score of 50 out of 100 in HAT or USAT test. Without providing minimum HAT or USAT test score (50 out of 100), applications will not be considered for further process. The test validity for HAT is 02 years and USAT is 01 year. For this scholarship, applicant must have already obtained a valid HAT (score obtained on or after December 09, 2022) or USAT score (score obtained on or after December 09, 2023).

As per tuition funds details, it will be comprehensively used by the host university. It may cover education, administration costs, health insurance and expenditures to support student activities.

Meanwhile, free university dormitory or accommodation subsidy will be provided to each awardee. While stipend will be given as per China Govt. Scholarship policy.

Travel expenditure would be borne by the scholarship winners themselves. HEC will have no financial liability in any case. The willing candidates are encouraged to apply online at: <http://scholarship.hec.gov.pk/> after registering and filling your profile, please select "Learning Opportunities Abroad".

After submission of the application, get its printed copy to be signed by the applicant. HEC online application portal shall close on Monday, 09th December 2024 (04.00 PM Pakistan Standard Time).

600,000 laptops distributed among students: Mashhood

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman of the Prime Minister Youth Programme (PMYP), Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan has said that as many as 600,000 laptops have been provided to the students under the Prime Minister Youth Laptop scheme on merit so far.

The Chairman PMYP told APP that 334,556 laptops had been given to males while 265,444 females received the laptops. He added that 100,000 laptops were distributed during the year 2024 including 58,000 to females and

42,000 to male students.

Giving province-wise details of the total laptops distribution, he informed that 247,389 laptops were provided to the residents of Punjab, 107,034 to Sindh, 76,094 to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 30,513 Balochistan, 112,270 to the Federal Capital area, 9,290 to FATA and 14,312 laptops had been given to the residents of Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

Mashhood said the government was working with the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission on skill development, especially the provision

of education, training and IT skills to youth through youth development programs.

"This year, we aim to provide direct training to over two lac youth and indirect training to over six lakh youth to meet the demand for skilled labourers abroad which will enable Pakistan to send skilled youth abroad for positive engagement." Additionally, through the "Laptop for All" scheme, students can obtain any laptop they want on interest-free loans with easy monthly instalments, he added.

Gov't Hajj Scheme receives over 54,000 applications

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony on Monday informed that over 54,000 applications have been received under the Government Hajj Scheme till to date.

According to the spokesperson Muhammad Umar Butt, the final deadline for submitting applications is on Tuesday, December 3.

He said the number of applications is expected to increase further by mid-night. He said it is anticipated that the quota for the

Government Hajj Scheme will be fully subscribed by the end of the day.

The spokesperson attributed the surge in applications to the facility of installment-based payment for Hajj expenses under the regular scheme, which made the pilgrimage more accessible compared to previous years.

As soon as the application process concludes, he said the Hajj flight schedule will be finalized, with accommodations being secured in Madina in line with the flight itineraries.

Additionally, arrangements for accommodation, meals, transportation, and logistical services, including Maktab allocations, will be completed in Saudi Arabia, he added.

Umar Butt urged overseas Pakistanis to ensure their participation in the scheme by sending sponsorship funds no later than December 3.

He said the government remains committed to facilitating a smooth and well-organized Hajj journey for all pilgrims under the official scheme.

OEC seeking services of CFO on contract basis

ISLAMABAD (APP): Overseas Employment Corporation (OEC) an attached department of Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (OP&HRD) was seeking the services of Chief Finance Officer (CFO) on the contract basis with the following qualifications and experience.

An official source told APP here on Monday, he said that CFO post laying vacant from a long time in the OEC and current administration has decided to fill this important post on immediate basis for smooth working of the office.

He said that the CFO shall be responsible for

ensuring that appropriate advice was given to the Board on all financial matters, for keeping proper financial records & accounts and for maintaining an effective system of internal financial control.

A member of a recognized body of professional accountants or a person holding a master's degree in finance from a university recognized by the Higher Education Commission.

Nature of appointment contract basis for three years (extendable), must have at least 3 to 5 years relevant experience in a reputed organization in case of a member of a recognized body of professional accountants; At least

10 years of relevant experience in case a person holds a master's degree in Finance.

Interested applicants may send their applications along with a detailed CV along with all supporting documents, CNIC, and Photographs on below-mentioned address through courier. Only shortlisted candidates will be called for the test/interview.

No TA/DA will be provided for the Test/Interview. For any query technical support contact the OEC-Help Desk Team at UAN: 0311-0011-632, and E-mail: helpdesk@oec.gov.pk.

The closing date: 9th December, 2024.

CDA vows high-tech crackdown on encroachments

ISLAMABAD (APP): Capital Development Authority (CDA) has taken a decisive step towards addressing encroachment issues and unregulated urban growth through advanced geo-spatial technology.

A meeting chaired by Muhammad Ali Randhawa, Chairman of CDA, brought together senior officials from planning, estate, and enforcement wings to discuss the project's progress.

The meeting highlighted the CDA's latest geo-spatial survey, conducted with satellite imagery provided by SUPARCO, covering Islamabad's key commercial areas. This cutting-edge initiative has revealed encroachments, building violations, and instances of improper land use in the capital city.

Chairman Randhawa called for a unified planning approach to tackle these issues, stressing the importance of continuous land monitoring through

drones equipped with advanced tools. "A centralised strategy is essential to curb encroachments and ensure proper urban planning for Islamabad's residents," he said.

Real-time imagery from SUPARCO has proven instrumental in tracking changes in land usage and identifying unauthorised developments.

The Chairman emphasised the need for strict Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) with clear timelines to streamline the survey process. Daily monitoring and reporting mechanisms were also discussed, with Randhawa instructing teams to work in close coordination with district administration for anti-encroachment operations.

He further directed that FIRs be registered against repeat offenders to prevent future violations and ensure encroachment-free public spaces.

Women traders get opportunities at CDA's weekly Bazaar: CDA's weekly Bazaar at Peshawar Mor, one of the country's busiest and most vibrant markets, is not just a hub for affordable clothing, food, and groceries but also a beacon of empowerment for women traders.

While traditionally male-dominated, the weekly bazaar has Section C, a women entrepreneurs-dominated area for the past few years, where they run stalls selling various products and earn a respectable livelihood. Samira Moeed, who recently set up a stall selling purses and accessories, shared her experience, stating, "I've been running this stall for a month, while the environment is quite safe here. We ensure quality products at slightly lower prices than the market. Female customers feel comfortable shopping with us."



RAWALPINDI: Food lovers gather at the food street to buy crispy fried fish and chicken as the winter season a surge in demand across the twin cities. —APP Photo

DC holds 'Khuli Kutchary' to resolve problems of citizens

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon on Monday held an open court (Khuli Kutchary) at his office under open door policy to resolve public problems on priority.

The DC listened to the queries and complaints of the citizens in person and gave directions to the concerned officer/department for immediate redressal, said a spokesman of the ICT administration.

A large number of people attended the open court and lodged their complaints regarding different problems. Irfan Memon directed all Assistant Commissioners to meet with citizens on a daily basis. The purpose for holding such meetings was to resolve citizens' grievances at the earliest and ensure speedy justice, he added.

DC emphasized that government offices must keep their doors open for the public during working hours. He stated that strict action will be taken against any officer who refuses to meet with citizens or fails to address their concerns.

He said all Assistant Commissioners and Magistrates were engaged in the redressal of public grievances within their respective jurisdictions.

NA body lauds NHMP for ensuring road safety of commuters

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Assembly's Standing Committee on Communications on Monday lauded the National Highways and Motorways Police (NHMP) for ensuring road safety and excellence on country's roads aiming to facilitate and assistance the commuters.

The meeting was held under the chairmanship of MNA Aijaz Hussain Jakhraani to discuss agenda such as NHMP, Pakistan Post, the National Transport Research Center, enemy property cell and any other item with the permission of the chair, said a press release.

Inspector General (IG) NHMP apprised the committee that the National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) oversees traffic regulation, safety, and security across 4,736 km of motorways and national highways, including key routes like M-1, M-2, M-5, N-5, and N-25. Established in 1997, NHMP enforces laws under the National Highway Safety Ordinance (NHSO) 2000, focusing on commuter assistance, traffic management, and Axle Load Control. With 9,098 officers cur-

rently serving out of 15,607 sanctioned positions, NHMP issued 13.3 million tickets and collected Rs 15.4 billion in fines from January to November 2024.

Under the Axle Load Control Regime, fines rose by 133 percent to Rs 4.26 billion. Over 1.6 million commuters received assistance during this period. NHMP's Drivers Licensing Authority (DLA), following international standards, has issued over 144,000 licenses since 2014.

Modern initiatives like e-ticketing, cashless systems and vehicle tracking were transforming operations to ensure safer and more efficient travel for all road users. The committee members appreciated the work of Motorways Police.

The Pakistan Post, advancing connectivity and financial inclusion, the Director General (DG), briefed the committee that Pakistan Post Office Department (PPOD), with over 10,000 branches nationwide, continues to be a cornerstone of communication and financial inclusion, offering services like domestic and international mail, remittance solutions, utili-

ty bill collections, and CNIC renewals. In FY 2023-24, Pakistan Post achieved 30.35 percent revenue growth. Modernization efforts, supported by Korea's EXIM Bank through the EDCF, include ICT upgrades, field automation with 1,000 motorcycles and mobile devices and paperless mail transmission. These initiatives, set for completion by November 2026, ensure enhanced operational efficiency and service quality. Pakistan Post remains committed in driving socio-economic development and supporting the SDGs.

The Secretary, Communications apprised the committee that Pakistan Post was generating an income of Rs 9.2 billion annually, whereas its expenditures amounted to Rs 28 billion. However, The Secretary informed that the ministry has submitted a business plan to the government aimed at facilitating the department's growth.

The committee directed the Pakistan Post to prepare a presentation for the next meeting, including a comparative analysis with two or three other countries in the region.

IESCO notifies power suspension programme

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

According to IESCO Spokesperson, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM, Islamabad Circle, Kirpa, Jinnah Bazar, Alam Abad, New Race Course, Officer Colony, Zircon Heights, Lakho Road, I-14/3, I-14/2, Benazir Bhutto Shaheed Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Haider Road, Jahangir Road, Rahmatabad, I, NPF I, Mohra Nagyal, Scheme III, Lair Colony, KH Road, Defense Road, Ranyal, Shah Jeevan, RA Bazar, Rajar, Sahala College, Lahtrar-II, Doberan, Panjar, Mandra, PAEHS, Bengali, Raman, Gagan Feeders, Attock Circle, Gori, Salar Gah, Mushtaq Hussain, Kala Khan, Faisal Hill-I & II, Model Town, Kashif Gul, Mix Industry, Shahullah Ditta, Sarai Kharboza, Lalazar, Burhan, Pathargarh, Colonel Sher Khan, Musa, Hattian, Qaziabad, Shams, Abad, Power Channel Company, Barazai, People Colony, Mari, Shikardara, Dilawabad, DI Colony, Muslim Town, Chhaji Mar, Bahtar, Jund I & II, Dharnal, Fateh Jang, Dhakner Feeders, Jhelum Circle, F-

Jinnah Road, Sir Syed Road, Sarafa Bazar, Alam Abad, New Race Course, Officer Colony, Zircon Heights, Lakho Road, I-14/3, I-14/2, Benazir Bhutto Shaheed Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Haider Road, Jahangir Road, Rahmatabad, I, NPF I, Mohra Nagyal, Scheme III, Lair Colony, KH Road, Defense Road, Ranyal, Shah Jeevan, RA Bazar, Rajar, Sahala College, Lahtrar-II, Doberan, Panjar, Mandra, PAEHS, Bengali, Raman, Gagan Feeders, Attock Circle, Gori, Salar Gah, Mushtaq Hussain, Kala Khan, Faisal Hill-I & II, Model Town, Kashif Gul, Mix Industry, Shahullah Ditta, Sarai Kharboza, Lalazar, Burhan, Pathargarh, Colonel Sher Khan, Musa, Hattian, Qaziabad, Shams, Abad, Power Channel Company, Barazai, People Colony, Mari, Shikardara, Dilawabad, DI Colony, Muslim Town, Chhaji Mar, Bahtar, Jund I & II, Dharnal, Fateh Jang, Dhakner Feeders, Jhelum Circle, F-

7 Kachhari, F-13 Garmala, Bolani, Pran, F-8 Civil Line, F-9 Chak Daulat, Mangala Cantt., Capt Nisar Shaheed, Hissot, New Sanghui, Col Mohammad Akram, Scheme-I, Kalia, Pind Mate Khan, Mill Awan, Galiana, Qazian Feeders, Chakwal Circle, Kariala, Millat Chowk, Jamal Wall, Dhadanka, Main Bazar, Dera Muslim, Dhadiyal Express, Suhigalabad, Bhikri, Dandut, Duffer, Toba, PD Khan, Abdullahpur, Kot Chowdhury, Dharabi, GPO Chowk, Medina Town, Murat, Tala Ganga City, Dhok, Pathan, Dhalar, Jatla, Kot Sarang, Muglla, Para Fatial, Darut, Mail, Vanhar Feeders, GSO Circle, From 09:00 AM to 04:00 PM, Industrial-II, I-8/4, A Block, Service Road, Wisa, Khurram Colony, Jinnah Camp, Kurry Road, Hamza Camp, Talagang City, Peera Fatial, Jatla, Dharabi, Murat, Kot Sarang, Main Bazaar, Mugla, Dhok Pathan, Medina Town, Dhular, Feeders and surrounding areas.

Over 100 farmers arrested

KABUL (Amu TV): Taliban authorities in Afghanistan's northeastern Badakhshan province have arrested more than 100 farmers on charges of cultivating poppies, a key ingredient in opium production. Quoted by AFP, Shafiqullah Hafizi, the Taliban's director of counter-narcotics police in Badakhshan, said the arrests were made during recent operations in several villages. "Our forces detained these individuals while they were cultivating poppies," Hafizi said.

The Frontier Post

Jamadi-ul-Awwal 30, 1446 — Tuesday, December 03, 2024

Minister resumes tours

HELMAND (Amu TV): The Taliban's Minister for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, Khalid Hanafi, has resumed his provincial tours to oversee the implementation of their controversial morality law, based on which, severe restrictions have been imposed on women's rights. During his recent visit to Helmand province, Hanafi urged religious scholars to use their sermons to educate the public about the law's provisions.

Work on TAPI project finally kicks off in Afghanistan

KABUL (Ariana News): The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan's spokesman says practical work on the Afghanistan section of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) project has started.

Zabihullah Mujahid told Ariana News that technical equipment needed to implement the project was transferred to the border area between Afghanistan and Turkmenistan and that practical work has started.

Mujahid added that a large number of people are

working in different sections of this project and its first phase will be completed in the next two years.

According to Mujahid, practical work on the CASA-1000 project and other projects will also start soon.

The spokesman of the Islamic Emirate said that Afghanistan will slowly strengthen and good job opportunities will be provided for the country's citizens.

Economic experts also believe that this project will play a vital role in the

growth of the region's economy.

According to TAPI project officials, once completed, 12,000 people in Afghanistan will have job opportunities, and Afghanistan's annual income from this project will be close to one billion dollars.

The TAPI pipeline is 1,821 kilometers long and has an annual transport capacity of 33 billion cubic meters of natural gas, making it one of the largest regional infrastructure projects.

Hanafi explores Bukhara's cultural ties

KABUL (BNA): Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi, the Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, continued his official visit to Uzbekistan by exploring the cultural and historical landmarks of Bukhara province.

According to a statement from ARG, Mawlawi Hanafi also met with the Governor of Bukhara, Batur Zarifov. During their meeting, Zarifov highlighted the strong cultural and historical ties between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan, emphasizing that these shared legacies could further strengthen bilateral relations under the leadership of both nations.

Mawlawi Hanafi expressed gratitude for Uzbekistan's hospitality and acknowledged the two countries' shared Islamic cultural and historical significance. He noted that leveraging these commonalities could enhance mutual ties to an unprecedented level.

It is worth mentioning that earlier, Hanafi held meetings with several senior Uzbek officials as part of his ongoing visit.

Afghanistan, Turkey hold talks on trade, investment

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Industry and Commerce has announced the convening of a joint meeting between 130 Afghan and Turkish companies from sectors including minerals, construction, medical, and pharmaceuticals.

Akhundzada Abdul Salam Jawad, spokesperson for the ministry, stated that during the meeting, attended by the acting minister of Industry and Commerce, topics such as increasing trade between the two countries, resolving transit and transportation challenges, and activating the Lapis Lazuli corridor were discussed.

"Speakers at the meeting emphasized strengthening trade between the two countries, and the Turkish side expressed its readiness to cooperate with Afghanistan and other countries to activate the Lapis Lazuli corridor," Akhundzada Abdul Salam Jawad said.

The Afghan-Turk Businessmen's Union based in Istanbul stated that three key issues were discussed



during the meeting.

"The most important topics of this meeting included attracting Turkish investors to Afghanistan, reducing trade tariffs, and facilitating visa conditions for Afghan businessmen," said Ezatullah Sadat, head of the union.

The Chamber of Commerce and Investment emphasized that the Lapis

Lazuli corridor could facilitate Afghanistan's exports to Turkey and from there to European countries.

Jan Aqa Naveed, spokesperson for the chamber, added: "The Lapis Lazuli route can connect Afghanistan to Europe via land, air, and sea."

According to information from the Ministry of Industry and Commerce,

Turkish companies have expressed interest in investing in areas such as agriculture, mining, energy, Islamic banking, and legal affairs in Afghanistan.

Both sides also emphasized establishing a joint trade chamber, organizing trade exhibitions, and continuing to hold such meetings.

Delawar highlights Afghanistan's needs



KABUL (TOLONews): Shahabuddin Delawar, acting Director of the Afghan Red Crescent Society, shared information with participants at a seminar in China about Afghanistan's humanitarian needs, the activities of the Afghan Red Crescent, and the organization's future programs.

The Afghan Red Crescent Society stated that the seminar was organized in China by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC),

and the national societies of 11 countries.

According to the Afghan Red Crescent, the seminar aimed to enhance the effectiveness of humanitarian aid, introduce modern leadership and management concepts, and explore new methods for delivering humanitarian services.

"At this seminar, discussions were held about Afghanistan's humanitarian situation, cooperation on humanitarian aid, the activities of the Red Crescent, and the organization's winter needs," said Mudassir Hamraz, the spokesperson

for the Afghan Red Crescent Society.

Some economic experts, considering Afghanistan's extensive needs, deemed such trips effective and emphasized the necessity of systematic planning to attract humanitarian assistance.

"A specific program must be developed to attract aid. The government should appoint specific individuals to liaise with these organizations and establish systematic strategies," said Mohammad Nabi Afghan, an economic analyst.

"These initiatives are very beneficial. Afghanistan needs sustained assistance until we can finance our budget from domestic sources," said Ismail Zadran, another economic expert.

The Afghan Red Crescent Society, as a humanitarian charity organization, works to provide services to victims of natural disasters and treat those in need across Afghanistan, playing a crucial role in mitigating humanitarian crises.

Nearly 200 AIDS cases reported in Afghanistan

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Public Health reported that approximately 200 positive cases of HIV/AIDS have been recorded in Afghanistan during the current solar year.

Sharafat Zaman Amarkhil, spokesperson for the ministry, stated that there are eight treatment centers and 61 diagnostic centers for this disease across the country.

He said: "Among the 200 positive cases recorded with us this year, one reason is the lack of treatment centers in some areas. Now, these patients have been provided with care, and more services have been made available to the pub-

lic." Meanwhile, the head of the AIDS treatment department at the Afghan-Japan Communicable Disease Hospital reported that 1,555 patients have been registered with them, including 116 new cases since the beginning of this year.

Mohammad Khan Hedayat, a staff member at the hospital, also called on doctors and health aid organizations to collaborate in treating other illnesses of those affected by AIDS.

He added: "In total, 1,555 patients are registered with us. Over the past eight and a half to nine months, 116 new patients

have been registered this year. Our patients face significant challenges in undergoing surgeries. We request the government and partner organizations to support us and our patients in this area."

This year, the World Health Organization (WHO) observed World AIDS Day under the theme, "Take the Rights Path: My Health, My Right!"

WHO reported that in 2023, around 39.9 million people worldwide were living with HIV/AIDS, approximately 630,000 people lost their lives due to the disease, and about 1.3 million people contracted HIV.

Work begins on road

KABUL (BNA): The construction of the first section of the Bagrami-Lata Band to Kabul-Jalalabad road has officially commenced. This section, stretching 3.3 kilometers in length and 60 meters in width, is located in District 21 of Kabul and is being developed with an investment of 340 million Afghanis.

Engineer Miralrahman Nasiri, Head of the Programs and Projects Department at Kabul Municipality, highlighted the strategic importance of this road. He emphasized that it serves as a vital economic corridor for the southeastern region of Afghanistan. The road is expected to be completed with high standards within the next 18 months.

Currently, preliminary work is underway, which includes excavation, earthworks, clearing, and the removal of obstacles to facilitate the primary construction activities.

The project will also encompass the construction of a major bridge, small bridges, retaining walls, drainage systems, pedestrian walkways, flower beds, stations, street lighting, and road markings.

Two MoUs signed

HERAT (BNA): Director General of Finance and Administration and Acting Head of ANDMA have signed two cooperation agreements with the Deputy of the OHW Institute to address the needs of vulnerable communities in four provinces.

The agreements were signed by Mawlawi Mohammad Alam Alamyar, Director General of Finance and Administration and Acting Head of the NDMA, and Dr. Hikmatullah Usmani, Deputy of the OHW Institute.

These agreements focus on mutual cooperation to assist those affected during the winter season and to ensure better coordination in the implementation of various projects.

The first memorandum, valued at \$737,548, aims to support 1,830 vulnerable families in the provinces of Helmand, Sar-e-Pul, and Takhar. Assistance includes \$200 per family for winter fuel, \$74 for winter clothing, and \$57 for blankets, distributed as follows: 720 families in Helmand, 340 in Sar-e-Pul, and 770 in Takhar.

The second agreement, valued at \$93,554, targets the Injil district of Herat. It includes the construction of 75 latrines for 150 families, five blankets for each of these families, \$70 in cash or its equivalent in Afghanistan for purchasing winter food supplies, the installation of solar-powered electrical systems for 150 families, and water purification systems for 75 families.

Private hospitals panned for fleecing patients

KABUL (Pajhwok): Some residents of Kabul have raised concerns at the high cost of medication and tests at private hospitals, assailing doctors for prescribing patients unnecessary procedures.

In response, the Private Hospitals Union says it opposes such practices and will take action if they are identified at any hospital.

A resident of Kabul's Ahmad Shah Baba Mina area, Kaptan, told Pajhwok Afghan News he was prescribed additional tests and medication during visits to private hospitals.

"They charge 30 afghanis for a medicine worth 10 afghanis, and there's no one to question it," he claimed.

Sayed Alam, hailing from Kart-e-Naw area, is suffering from a neurological condition. He slammed not only the high cost of

medication at private hospitals, but also the quality of their services.

"They charge us 700 or 800 afghanis for a medicine that should cost 500 af. Its quality is poor; it doesn't work," he commented, expressing frustration with his persisting condition.

Shukurullah, a resident of Shakar Dara district, highlighted the financial challenges many Kabul inhabitants faced. Limited income prevented him from treatment at private hospitals, he added.

He called on the government to regulate the prices of medication and tests in these hospitals and to curb exploitative business practices.

No tolerance of unnecessary tests

Mujib-ur-Rahman Nasiri, head of the Private Hospitals Union, acknowl-

edged that Afghanistan was a consumer country heavily dependent on imports of essential goods and medications, driving up the cost of medical treatment at private hospitals.

He explained, "We spend around 900 afghanis on electricity supply to a single patient's room, and a nurse's salary per night is 700 afghanis. Around 90 percent of private hospitals are operating in commercial buildings, adding to the cost."

While prescribing unnecessary investigations was the doctor's discretion, the union does not condone such practices, according to Nasiri.

He assured if any private hospital was found involved in these activities, the union would intervene to prevent it.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH)

claims to have made significant strides in controlling the prices of tests and medicines at private hospitals. It says efforts are ongoing to further regulate such hospitals.

Dr. Sharafat Zaman Amr, a spokesman for the MoPH, explained that, based on the current landscape of private hospital services, costs have been temporarily controlled.

He also noted the ministry had been in discussions with the private sector and hospital leaders, urging them to offer discounts to patients.

According to the Private Hospitals Union, since the return of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, around 200 new private hospitals have opened, bringing the number of such facilities in the country to approximately 700.

Committee convenes to address issues facing printers, publishers

KABUL (BNA): The Ministry of Information and Culture convened a meeting to discuss and address the challenges faced by printing presses, publishers' unions, and book and paper sellers. The session was chaired by Mawlawi Abdul Aleem Zaanwak Muftizada, the Head of Bayhaqi Books Publications.

During the meeting, committee members highlighted several pressing concerns, and Zaanwak assured his commitment to resolving the issues.

The meeting concluded with decisions to propose measures aimed at improving the conditions of publishers and booksellers.

These include allocating a specific location for creating a market and cultural hub for these stakeholders, providing special tax exemptions to private publishers and booksellers, and granting



waivers and reductions on customs duties for importing paper and raw materials for paper production. Furthermore, the proposals emphasized the importance of facilitating the printing of the Holy Quran and other books, prioritizing the purchase

of locally produced books for use in government institutions, particularly by the Ministries of Higher Education and Education, and establishing specialized departments in academic institutions to focus on bookbinding, design, mini-

atures, printing, and technical aspects of book production.

The recommendations are expected to be submitted to the Prime Minister's Office for approval, aiming to enhance cultural and literary development in Afghanistan.

NEPA pushes for plastic reduction

KABUL (TOLONews): Officials of the National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) say that approximately 4 tons of plastic bags are used daily in the country.

According to these officials, the widespread use of plastic bags has become a serious issue for environmental pollution.

"Approximately 4 tons of plastic bags are consumed daily, which causes environmental problems. In recent years, the Environmental Protection Agency has launched campaigns to ban the use of plastics and emphasized replacing plas-

tic bags with cloth bags," said Tofan Jabrin, head of the Department of Regulation and Control of Air Pollution and Garbage.

Vendors say that due to the low cost of plastic items, most people tend to use them.

"People use plastic items because they are cheaper, while porcelain utensils are more expensive and unaffordable for many," said Tamim, a vendor.

"Due to economic challenges, our people opt for cheaper alternatives like plastic," said Abdullah, another vendor.

Some Kabul residents

have urged officials to launch awareness programs to reduce the use of plastic.

"People need to be made aware of using cloth bags instead of plastic because plastic causes pollution," said Abdul Khaliq, a resident of Kabul.

Doctors also warn that using plastic utensils can pose health risks.

"The chemical substances in plastic utensils can cause allergies, respiratory problems, and even cancer," said Samiullah Ahmadi, a doctor.

At the same time, Kabul Municipality says it has so far conducted 400 aware-

ness programs in schools and employed 200 women for door-to-door awareness campaigns on this issue.

"Every month, we organize campaigns to reduce the use of plastics and distribute cloth bags. These bags are more durable and biodegradable," said Nemat Ullah Barakzai, a representative of Kabul Municipality.

With the continuation of these efforts, officials hope that the use of plastics will decrease and that a culture of using environmentally friendly materials will be promoted in society.

350m afn allocated for 60 uplift projects in Paktika



KABUL (BNA): Work on around 60 development projects, with a total cost of 350 million Afghanis, has commenced in five districts of Paktika province.

During the inauguration ceremony, Paktika Governor Alhaj Mullah Abdul Khaliq Abid emphasized the commitment of the Islamic Emirate leadership to implementing impactful projects aimed at addressing the essential

needs of citizens across the country.

The projects, set to be executed in Bermal, Shkin, Nematabad, Warmami, and Tarwa districts, include the construction of roads, schools, madrassas, mosques, and water supply networks.

Local elders and residents welcomed the initiative, expressing gratitude, stating that this long-standing aspiration of over 20

years has been realized under the leadership of the Islamic Emirate.

Moreover, these projects are expected to create employment opportunities for dozens of people from the respective regions.

It is worth noting that work has already commenced in Bermal and Shkin districts, with activities in the remaining districts scheduled to start soon.



TEHRAN: Deputy Prime Minister, Ishaq Dar arrived in Mashhad, Iran to participate in the 28th meeting of Council of Ministers of the Economic Cooperation Organization.

Israeli strikes hit southern Lebanon, but tense ceasefire holds

BEIRUT (AFP, Reuters): Israeli jets Sunday launched an airstrike over a southern Lebanese border village, while troops shelled other border towns and villages still under Israeli control, Lebanon's state-run National News Agency reported.

The attacks come days after a US-brokered ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hezbollah went into effect. There were no immediate reports of casualties. The Israeli military did not immediately comment on the strike in the village of Yaroun, nor did the Hezbollah militant group. Israel continues to call on displaced Lebanese not to return to dozens of southern villages in this current stage of the ceasefire. It also continues to impose a daily curfew for people moving across the Litani River between 5 p.m. and 7 a.m.

Caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati and the Lebanese military have been critical of Israeli strikes and overflights since the ceasefire went into effect, accusing Israel of violating the agreement. The military said it had filed complaints, but no clear military action has been taken by Hezbollah in response, meaning that the tense cessation of hostilities has not yet broken down. When Israel has issued statements about these strikes, it says they were done to thwart possible Hezbollah attacks.

The US military announced Friday that Major General Jasper Jeffers alongside senior US envoy Amos

Hochstein will co-chair a new US-led monitoring committee that includes France, the UN peacekeeping mission in southern Lebanon known as UNIFIL, Lebanon, and Israel. Hochstein led over a year of shuttle diplomacy to broker the ceasefire deal, and his role will be temporary until a permanent civilian co-chair is appointed. Lebanon meanwhile is trying to pick up the pieces and return to some level of normal life after the war that decimated large swaths of its south and east, displacing an estimated 1.2 million people. The Lebanese military said it detonated unexploded munitions left over from Israeli strikes in southern and eastern Lebanon. Elsewhere, the Lebanese Civil Defense said it removed five bodies from under the rubble in two southern Lebanese towns over the past 24 hours.

The first phase of the ceasefire is a 60-day cessation of hostilities where Hezbollah militants are supposed to withdraw from southern Lebanon north of the Litani River and Israeli troops withdraw from southern Lebanon into northern Israel. Lebanese troops are to deploy in large numbers in the south, effectively being the only armed force in control of the south alongside UNIFIL peacekeepers. But challenges still remain at this current stage. Many families who want to bury their dead deep in southern Lebanon are unable to do so at this point.

The Lebanese Health Ministry and military allocated a plot of land in the coastal city of Tyre for those people to be temporarily laid to rest. Dr. Wissam Ghazal of the Health Ministry in Tyre said almost 200 bodies have been temporarily buried in that plot of land, until the situation near the border calms down. "Until now, we haven't been able to go to our village, and our hearts are burning because our martyrs are buried in this manner," said Om Ali, who asked to be called by a nickname that means "Ali's mother" in Arabic. Her husband was a combatant killed in the war from the border town of Aita el-Shaab, just a stone's throw from the tense border.

"We hope the crisis ends soon so we can go and bury them properly as soon as possible, because truly, leaving the entrusted ones buried in a non-permanent place like this is very difficult," she said. In the meantime, cash-strapped Lebanon is trying to fundraise as much money as it can to help rebuild the country the war cost some \$8.5 billion in damages and losses according to the World Bank, and to help recruit and train troops to deploy 10,000 personnel into southern Lebanon. Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri also called for parliament to convene to elect a president next month to break a gridlock of over two years and reactivate the country's crippled state institutions.

Dar arrives in Iran to attend ECO moot

MASHHAD, Iran: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar has reached Mashhad city of Iran to participate in the 28th meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).

The Vice Governor General of Razavi Khorasan Province, Mohammad Ali Nabipour, along with Pakistan's Ambassador to Iran, Mudassar Tipu, accorded a warm welcome to him upon his arrival at the airport. The ECO meeting brings together member states to discuss and strengthen economic and regional cooperation in various sectors.

The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) is a regional inter-governmental organization established in 1985 by Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey. It aims to promote economic, technical, and cultural cooperation among its member states. Over the years, the ECO has expanded to include seven additional countries: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, making it a platform for fostering regional integration and sustainable development.

The Council of Ministers, the highest decision-making body of the ECO, meets annually to evaluate progress, discuss policy initiatives, and set future agendas. The 28th meeting of the Council in Mashhad, Iran, provides an opportunity for member states to deliberate on issues such as trade facilitation, energy collaboration, environmental sustainability, and transportation development in the region.

Pakistan, as a founding member of the ECO, plays a pivotal role in the organization's activities. Deputy Prime Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar's participation reflects Pakistan's commitment to fostering regional cooperation and addressing shared challenges through collaborative efforts. — Agencies

Every citizen has right to protest: PkMAP

E.P. Report

QUETTA: Pushtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) Chairman Mahmood Khan Achakzai on Monday urged the government to either respect the mandate given to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder chief Imran Khan or hold fresh general elections.

He was addressing a public gathering at Sadiq Shaheed Ground in Quetta, commemorating the 51st death anniversary of Khan Shaheed Abdul Samad Khan Achakzai. Achakzai underscored the importance of upholding the Constitution, parliamentary supremacy, and equitable control over resources for effective governance. He claimed that the last general election was marred by irregularities, where rightful winners were declared losers.

Criticising the use of force against PTI workers, he said, "Every citizen has the constitutional right to protest peacefully." He condemned the crackdown on PTI supporters during their demonstration in Islamabad, calling it a violation of democratic principles. Referring to the legitimacy of the current administration, Achakzai said, "Thieves cannot run the affairs of the country. Parliament is essential for governance, and I do not accept this government." He added that his party would not sit in the assembly if their presence was deemed undesirable.

He also expressed concerns over the state's inability to provide security, stating, "If the state cannot protect us, we are capable of defending ourselves." Drawing lessons from the country's history, he warned against the perils of suppressing dissent, saying, "Pakistan was once dismembered due to force, intimidation, and hatred." He cautioned that sidelining Imran Khan could backfire, remarking, "A dead Imran Khan would be more dangerous than a living one." Achakzai called upon state institutions to act as protectors of the country rather than individuals, urging them to prioritise Pakistan's interests over political allegiances.

Same facilities for all inmates SC declares plea inadmissible

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Supreme Court (SC) constitutional bench declared the plea seeking same facilities for all inmates inadmissible. As per details, the constitutional bench headed by Justice Aminuddin, comprising Justice Jamal Mandokhel disposed off the plea, stating that its not the Supreme Court's responsibility to review the facilities provided to inmates.

The court urged the petitioner to approach the concerned provincial courts if there is any objection to the jail rules. In a separate development earlier prisoners in Punjab jails demanded same facilities as those provided to Imran Khan, who is currently incarcerated in Adiala jail. In a letter written to Punjab advocate general, IG prisons stated that the prisoners have requested the same privileges as Imran Khan, including six meetings with his lawyers in a day. The prisoners have expressed their discontent with the special treatment given to the former prime minister. They have argued that providing such facilities to one person while denying them to others is a violation of the Prison Rules 1978.

Earlier, Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Yahya Afridi expressed displeasure over the overcrowding in jails of the country, saying that over 108,000 persons are incarcerated in the

prisons originally designed for 66,625 inmates. Chairing a meeting focused on improving prison conditions and the welfare of prisoners, the CJP while quoting the Law and Justice Commission said that 36,128 prisoners have been waiting for trial for over a year.

CJP Yahya Afridi said that Punjab province is the most affected by overcrowding in jails with 67,837 prisoners being held in facilities meant for 36,365. He was of the view that the large number of prisoners waiting for trial highlights the need for judicial reform.

Court bench disbands in case against appointment of LHC chief justice Alia Neelum: A constitutional bench of the Supreme Court hearing the petition challenging the appointment of Chief Justice of the Lahore High Court Justice Alia Neelum has been dissolved.

According to media reports, Justices Aminuddin Khan and Jamal Mandokhel recused themselves from the case, citing their roles as members of the Judicial Commission, which was involved in her appointment. Justice Aminuddin Khan stated that, as a member of the Judicial Commission for the appointment of the Lahore High Court Chief Justice, he could not hear the case.

Similarly, Justice Jamal Mandokhel emphasised that both judges, being part of the Commission, could not fairly hear the matter. The bench subsequently ordered the transfer of the case to another Constitutional Bench for further proceedings. The petition, filed by Pakistan Bar Council member Shafqat Mahmood Chohan on August 1, 2024, challenges Justice Alia Neelum's appointment, arguing that it violated the constitutional principle of seniority.

Chohan's petition contends that the seniority principle, as established in the Al-Jihad Trust case, has been disregarded in this appointment, and the court should declare it unconstitutional. He further argues that the appointment of a junior judge to the prestigious position of Chief Justice goes against established norms, and calls for the court to nullify the appointment. During the hearing, the Additional Attorney General asserted that seniority was not a fundamental right and cited past instances where the Chief Justice's appointment had not adhered strictly to seniority. Justice Jamal Mandokhel, acknowledging the complexity of the case, noted that both he and Justice Aminuddin Khan had participated in the Judicial Commission's approval of Justice Alia Neelum's nomination and therefore should not be involved in the hearing of the case.

LHC orders seizing unfit vehicles to combat smog

E.P. Report

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Monday ordered the relevant authorities to seize the vehicles that have not undergone fitness inspection as part of measures to combat smog in the city. LHC's Justice Shahid Karim issued a three-page order on the last hearing on petitions seeking to combat smog, remarking that the uninspected vehicles should be seized.

The development comes as smog continues to suffocate people in many parts of the country with Lahore being on the list of most polluted cities in the world with an "unhealthy" air quality index (AQI).

Lahore, home to millions and key economic hubs, boast a large number

of vehicles and several industrial units which contribute towards the high AQI readings. On Sunday, the district administration imposed a fine of Rs13.5 million to vehicles without fitness certificates and those contributing to smog and environmental pollution during the month of November.

Under the directive of Deputy Commissioner Lahore Syed Musa Raza, a strict crackdown is underway against vehicles causing smog. Two legal cases were registered, and two drivers were arrested for serious violations, during the campaign. From November 1 to 30, a total of 16,184 vehicles were inspected across Lahore. Among them, 2,691 smoke-emitting vehicles were fined, and 1,307 were

impounded.

Additionally, 1,602 vehicles without fitness certificates were penalised, and 1,023 were seized. During the month, the fitness of 8,000 vehicles was assessed, and 5,000 vehicles meeting technical standards were issued fitness certificates. During the hearing today, the court also sought report on industries operating in the Rahim Yar Khan district. According to the Parks and Horticulture Authority's (PHA) lawyer, there is a shortage of trees as per to the World Health Organization's (WHO) standards. The court remarked that the PHA said the proportion of trees in the city is much less than 71.2%. The LHC then adjourned the hearing till December 3 (today).



ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf exchanging views with RSNF West Fleet Commander, Rear Admiral, Mansour Bin Saud Al-Juaid at Naval Headquarters.

Syrian and Russian air forces strike Aleppo

CAIRO (Reuters): Syrian and Russian air forces were striking militant-held positions in Aleppo's eastern countryside, killing and wounding dozens of insurgents, according to a statement from the Syrian Prime Minister's office on Monday.

Russia said it continues to support Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and is analysing the situation on the ground after Islamist insurgents and other rebel groups seized territory in Syria. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Monday Russia would form its position based on unfolding events.

Meanwhile, Kurdish YPG forces began pulling out of areas under their control in the northeastern sector of Aleppo city under a deal with militant forces, sources and a resident said on Monday. The deal to pull out of Sheikh Maqsood and Bustan al Basha and other areas in the city allows civilians to leave to areas in northeast Syria under Kurdish control, the sources

told Reuters.

Meanwhile, Turkiye, which backs militant factions in Syria, rejected Monday any suggestion that "foreign interference" was behind the offensive launched by Islamists in the country's north. "It would be a mistake at this time to try to explain the events in Syria by any foreign interference," Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said at a joint press conference in Ankara with his Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi.

The recent flareup which saw Damascus losing swathes of territory in northwestern Syria, including Aleppo, during a lightning offensive by militants, was due to the government's failure to engage in dialogue with armed opposition groups, he said. "The lack of talks between [Damascus] and the opposition has brought the problem to this point," he said, describing it as "a mistake to ignore the legitimate demands of the opposition."

"Damascus must recon-

cile with its own people and the legitimate opposition," he added. Turkiye did "not want an escalation of the civil war," said the minister who told US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in a phone call Sunday that Ankara would support moves "to reduce tension" in Syria. Araghchi said it was crucial "to protect the achievements of the Astana process" to end Syria's civil war, which groups Ankara, Moscow and Tehran, and pledged to convene fresh ministerial talks in the Kazakh capital "soon."

The last such meeting took place in mid-November. "Syria must not become a center for terrorist groups," warned Araghchi in reference to the militant factions that staged last week's attack. Fidan also said it was "important that terror organizations do not take advantage of the instability" although he was referring to Kurdish-led rebels that Ankara sees as an offshoot of the banned Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

Bangladesh dismayed over Indian politician's call for UN peacekeepers

DHAKA (AP): Bangladesh's interim government expressed shock on Monday at a politician in neighbouring India's call to deploy UN peacekeeping forces in the country to protect Hindus and other minorities from violent attacks.

The Muslim-majority nation saw a student-led uprising in August that ousted autocratic premier Sheikh Hasina after 15 years of iron-fisted rule. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee of India's West Bengal state — which shares close cultural and linguistic ties with Bangladesh — urged New Delhi on Monday to petition the UN to address their concerns.

"They can send the peacekeeping force to Bangladesh and rescue our people," Banerjee said. Bangladesh's

de facto foreign minister Touhid Hossain expressed dismay over what amounted to one of the biggest censures of his country's leadership by India since Hasina's ouster. "I don't know, I can't understand why Mamata Banerjee made such a statement. I know her personally, I have visited her home several times," he told reporters.

Touhid accused Indian media of spreading disinformation about the status of Hindus in Bangladesh but offered a more conciliatory note to the neighbouring government. "Problems can be solved," he said. "Mutual interests must be preserved, and Bangladesh seeks a friendly relationship with India." Touhid, part of a caretaker cabinet tasked with impos-

ing democratic reforms following Hasina's ouster, said he had also spoken to other foreign diplomats to "dispel misunderstandings over minority issues".

Public sentiment in the Muslim-majority nation of 170 million is stacked against India, Hasina's main international patron. Social media posts verified by AFP also showed Bangladeshi students placing doormats with Indian flags imprinted on them in an online campaign against their neighbour. On the other side of the border, Hindu activists on Monday attempted to storm a Bangladeshi consulate during a protest in Agartala, a small Indian city not far from Bangladesh.

French govt faces collapse

PARIS (Reuters): The French government is all but certain to collapse later this week after far-right and left-wing parties said they will vote for a no-confidence motion against Prime Minister Michel Barnier.

Their move came after Barnier said he would try to ram a social security bill through parliament without a vote as a last-minute concession was not enough to win support for the bill from the far-right National Rally (RN). RN leader Marine Le Pen said her party would table its own no-confidence motion but would also vote for any similar bill by other parties. "The French have had enough," she said. "Maybe they thought with Michel Barnier things would get better, but they were even worse."

Mathilde Panot, of the hard-left France Unbowed, said: "Faced with this umpteenth denial of democracy, we will censure the government ... We are living in political chaos because of Michel Barnier's government and Emmanuel Macron's presidency." Should all RN lawmakers vote with the left to topple Barnier, the government will not survive. The opposition now has 24 hours to put forward a no-confidence motion. The vote could take place as early as Wednesday.

ICC chief lashes out at US, Russia over threats

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP): The president of the International Criminal Court lashed out at the United States and Russia for interfering with its investigations, calling threats and attacks on the court "appalling."

"The court is being threatened with draconian economic sanctions by another permanent member of the Security Council as if it was a terrorist organization," Judge Tomoko Akane, in her address to the institution's annual meeting, which opened on Monday. Akane was referring to remarks made by US Sen. Lindsey Graham, whose Republican party will control both branches of Congress in January, and who called the court a "dangerous joke" and urged Congress to sanction its prosecutor. "To any ally, Canada, Britain, Germany, France, if you try to help the ICC, we're going to sanction you," Graham said on Fox News.

This marks the first time the global court of justice calls out a sitting leader of a major Western ally. Graham was angered by an announcement last month that judges had granted a request from the court's chief prosecutor Karim Khan to issue arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, his former

defense minister and Hamas' military chief for crimes against humanity in connection with the nearly 14-month war in Gaza.

The decision has been denounced by critics of the court and given only milquetoast approval by many of its supporters, a stark contrast to the robust backing of an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin last year over war crimes in Ukraine. Graham's threat isn't seen as just empty words. President-elect Donald Trump sanctioned the court's previous prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, with a travel ban and asset freeze for investigating American troops and intelligence officials in Afghanistan.

Akane on Monday also had harsh words for Russia. "Several elected officials are being subjected to arrest warrants from a permanent member of the Security Council," she said. Moscow issued warrants for Khan and others in response to the investigation into Putin. The Assembly of States Parties, which represents the ICC's 124 member countries, will convene its 23rd conference to elect committee members and approve the court's budget against a backdrop of unfavorable headlines.

The ICC was established in 2002 as the world's per-

manent court of last resort to prosecute individuals responsible for the most heinous atrocities — war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and the crime of aggression. The court only becomes involved when nations are unable or unwilling to prosecute those crimes on their territory. To date, 124 countries have signed on to the Rome Statute, which created the institution. Those who have not include Israel, Russia and China. The ICC has no police force and relies on member states to execute arrest warrants.

US President Joe Biden called the warrants for Netanyahu and the former defense minister "outrageous" and vowed to stand with Israel. A year ago, Biden called the warrant for Putin "justified" and said the Russian president had committed war crimes. The US is not an ICC member country. France said it would "respect its obligations" but would need to consider Netanyahu's possible immunities. When the warrant for Putin was announced, France said it would "lend its support to the essential work" of the court. Another member country, Austria, begrudgingly acknowledged it would arrest Netanyahu but called the warrants "utterly incomprehensible."