

Court grants bail to co-accused  
F.P. Report

LAHORE: An accountability court on Tuesday granted bail to a co-accused in the Gujrat development projects reference filed by the NAB against former chief minister Punjab Parvez Elahi and others. The court directed the co-accused, Khalid Mahmood Chatta, to furnish surety bonds of Rs. 10 million to avail the relief of bail.



@thefrontierpost

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

www.thefrontierpost.com

Vol. XXXIXI

No. 311

Regd. No. 241

JAMADI US SANNI 01 1446 --WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 04 2024

PESHAWAR EDITION

12 PAGES

PRICE. 30

South Korea  
President  
Yoon declares  
martial law

SEOUL (Reuters): South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol on Tuesday declared martial law in an unannounced late night address broadcast live on YTN television, claiming he would eradicate "shameless pro-North Korean anti-state forces". He did not cite any specific threat from the nuclear-armed North, however, instead focusing on his domestic political opponents.

The surprise move sent shockwaves through the country, which had a series of authoritarian leaders early in its history but has been considered democratic since the 1980s. The Korean won was down sharply against the US dollar. The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Yoon said he had no choice but to resort to such a measure in order to safeguard free and constitutional order, saying opposition parties have taken hostage of the parliamentary process to throw the country into a crisis. "I declare martial law to protect the free Republic of Korea from the threat of North Korean communist forces, to eradicate the despicable pro-North Korean anti-state forces that are plundering the freedom and happiness of our people, and to protect the free constitutional order," Yoon said.

He did not say in the address what specific measures will be taken. Yonhap news agency reported that the entrance to the parliament building was blocked. "Tanks, armored personnel carriers, and soldiers with guns and knives will rule the country," Lee Jae-myung, leader of the opposition Democratic Party, which has the majority in parliament, said in a livestream online. "The economy of the Republic of Korea will collapse irretrievably. My fellow citizens, please come to the National Assembly."

Yoon cited a motion by the country's opposition Democratic Party, which has a majority in parliament, this week to impeach some of the country's top prosecutors and its rejection of a government budget proposal. South Korea's ministers on Monday protested the move by opposition DP last week to slash more than 4 trillion won from the government's budget proposal. Yoon said that action undermines the essential functioning of government administration. Yoon's predecessor, Moon Jae-in of the Democratic Party, said in a post on X that the country's democracy is in crisis. "I hope that the National Assembly will act quickly to protect our democracy from crumbling," he wrote in a post. "I ask the people to join forces to protect and save democracy and to help the National Assembly function normally." The United States is in contact with the South Korean government and is monitoring the situation closely, a White House spokesperson said. Some 28,500 US troops are stationed in South Korea to guard against the North. A spokesman for the US military command did not answer repeated phone calls.

PM urges global  
action to tackle  
water scarcity  
— underscore need for strong  
political will at Riyadh summit

RIYADH (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday underscored the need for strong political will, and global leadership to overcome the water crisis posing existential threat to the nations around the globe.

The prime minister, addressing the One Water Summit on the Margins of United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP-16) under the theme "Restore, Preserve, and Adapt" here expressed his profound gratitude to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, France, and Kazakhstan, as well as the World Bank for organizing the timely summit, to deliberate upon, one of humanity's most pressing challenges: water scarcity.

He said that water was the lifeblood of the planet; a cornerstone of economic development, food security, and environmental sustainability. "This life-sustaining resource, however, is coming under increasing stress. Nearly half of the world's population is facing, water scarcity, for at least part of the year. Billions remain, without clean drinking water, as water pollution, is rising, at alarming levels," he added.

The prime minister underlined that the water resources were fast depleting and degrading which was displacing millions, and causing, unprecedented destruction. "This is not a distant threat, but an alarm bell, for collective action. Pakistan is no stranger to these challenges. Our rivers, glaciers and aquifers are increasingly vulnerable to the impact of climate change, and population growth," he said.

He apprised the leaders at the summit that Pakistan was still grappling with the 2022, catastrophic floods, that caused, widespread damage, to its water resources and irrigation sector, in addition to affecting, millions of lives and livelihoods. At the same time, he said droughts posed an equally potent threat to the country. "Nearly 70% of our land consists of arid and semi-arid areas, and around 30% of our population, is directly affected by drought-like conditions. Projected temperature increases in Pakistan, are significantly higher, than the global average," he added.

Prime Minister Shehbaz highlighted that such catastrophic disasters and challenges were likely to scale up further in the absence of concerted international actions as it was one of the top ten countries, most vulnerable due to climate change. Commenting on the transboundary water management, he said that water transcended political boundaries, connecting nations and fostering shared ecosystems. "Pakistan, therefore, attaches great importance to transboundary cooperation. The Indus Water Treaty, which governs, the sharing of the Indus Basin's waters, is one example of such an arrangement." He added that the treaty witnessed unprecedented challenges in the recent years, due to a number of factors, including construction of upstream dams, whereas its effective functioning was key to maintaining regional peace and stability.

(Continued on Back Page)

PTI trying to hoodwink people  
through fake narrative: Tarar

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar said on Tuesday that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf was trying to hoodwink the people through fake narrative and lies.

Lambasting Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, in a media talk, he said that the party was creating a false narrative of firing on the protesters. He once again challenged the PTI to present a single piece of evidence showing a law enforcement agencies personnel firing bullets directly on the protesters.

"There is not a single video in which law enforcement agencies person can be seen directly firing upon protesters. They have all kinds of videos but there is no video evidence (of direct firing) as this never took

place", he maintained. The minister said that a video of a man running away in which he was saying that he hit by a gunshot, went viral. Attaullah Tarar said the same person in another video was claiming that he had got an injury on his hand. However when in the video, he opened the bandage on his hand no bullet mark was visible on his hand. Tarar stated that the PTI was defaming the state through their concocted stories based on lies.

The PTI is spreading lies about bodies and different leaders were giving different figures of fatalities ranging from a dozen to 4000. A senior leader of the PTI Lateef Khosa claimed that over 150 bodies were lying at his residence. He said even the PTI Chairman, Barrister Gohar remarked that there were only 12 bodies and all other

claims were bogus. He said there was no dead, if the PTI had any dead bodies they should present in front of the media. Taking a dig on the PTI, he said these bodies were found on Tik Tok, Facebook, X, WhatsApp and other social media platforms, but in reality, there were no dead bodies. He said the PTI was trying to hoodwink the nation through its lies and misleading statements. He said that it was unfortunate that such people form political parties who had no sense.

He also pointed out four Rangers personnel and a police officer were martyred, but no one from the PTI expressed sympathy with the bereaved families. The PTI miscreants target security forces and police personnel but later claim of make hue and cry of killing of their party workers.



RAWALPINDI: Chief of the Army Staff, General Syed Asim Munir interacting with troops during his visit to field training exercise near Narowal and Sialkot.



RIYADH: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in family photo of One-Water Summit in Saudi Arabia.

COAS visits  
field training  
exercise  
F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Chief of the Army Staff, General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), visited troops participating in a field training exercise near Narowal and Sialkot. He was given a comprehensive brief on the objectives and conduct of the exercise, which aimed to refine professional skills and battlefield procedures essential for addressing emerging operational challenges.

During the exercise, integrated fire and maneuver operations were conducted by various elements, including Armour, Infantry, Mechanized Infantry, Artillery, Air Defence, Army Aviation and Anti-Tank Guided Missile units. The exercise also demonstrated the effective employment of electronic warfare capabilities and information operations designed to disrupt enemy communications and counter disinformation strategies in a modern battlefield environment.

COAS spent the day in the field alongside the troops, commending their training standards, operational readiness, and high state of morale. In his interaction with the participants, he emphasized the critical importance of maintaining constant preparedness to counter any potential threats posed by adversaries. "The Pakistan Armed Forces, with the resolute support of the nation, are fully capable of safeguarding the territorial integrity and sovereignty of our beloved motherland against the entire spectrum of threats," the COAS affirmed. Earlier, upon his arrival at the exercise area, COAS was welcomed by the Commander Gujranwala Corps and the Inspector General of Training and Evaluation.

Zardari greets  
Pakistan Blind  
Cricket team  
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Tuesday congratulated the Pakistan Blind Cricket team on winning the fourth Blind T20 World Cup by defeating Bangladesh by 10 wickets.

Lauding the players for showing a fabulous game, the president congratulated the team for clinching the World Cup on the day when the world was observing the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

US labels Taliban  
as terrorists  
— growing concerns of Taliban expansion in Pakistan

F.P. Report

WASHINGTON DC: During a recent press briefing, Matthew Miller, spokesperson for the US State Department, was asked by The Frontier Post about the US position on the Taliban regime and its implications for regional stability. Miller reiterated the US's unequivocal stance: "The United States has been very clear in its position. We consider the Taliban to be a terrorist organization, and their actions—particularly their ongoing repression of women and girls—stand in direct opposition to basic human rights and Islamic values."

The question came amid heightened tensions in Pakistan, where concerns are mounting about the Taliban's influence in border regions, particularly Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Recent analysis suggests that the Taliban regime in Afghanistan is benefiting from geopolitical support from powers like Russia, China, Iran, and even India, complicating the regional security landscape for Pakistan.

Critics argue that Pakistan is unprepared to address the threat posed by Taliban expansionism. The lack of strategic foresight, coupled with political infighting, has left areas like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa vulnerable. Many journalists and analysts have also pointed out the insufficient attention being given to this issue in Pakistan's political discourse.

https://twitter.com/afridi\_jalil/sta-tus/1863702902667121066?s=46&t=1GrxUKN0FC3kXYYVkoZpg

In a scathing critique, concerns were raised about

the political leadership in Pakistan, including Ali Amin Khan of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party. A source commented, "If political leaders, such as Mr. Ali Amin Khan, continue to dismiss these critical security issues as secondary to political gamesmanship, the consequences for the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa could be dire."

Women's rights activists have also condemned the Taliban's misogynistic policies, likening them to those enforced by authoritarian regimes in Iran. "Girls without education is not Islam."

It's a psychic attitude," one activist remarked. The repression of Afghan women has become a rallying cry for human rights defenders globally, further isolating the Taliban regime on the international stage.

US State Dept official  
addresses Pashtun casualties

F.P. Report

WASHINGTON, D.C: In a press briefing on Monday, US State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller was asked by The Frontier Post to comment on a potential case study examining the recurring pattern of Pashtun casualties in Pakistan, whether during political rallies or incidents of terrorism. While Miller refrained from committing to such a study, he reiterated the United States' stance on supporting democratic norms and peaceful protest in Pakistan.

The question stemmed from growing concerns about the disproportionate impact of violence on Pashtun communities in Pakistan. Observers have noted a troubling trend in which Pashtuns often bear the brunt of violence, whether during political rallies—such as those organized by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)—or in acts of terrorism targeting the region.

"The United States strongly supports the right to peaceful protest as a cornerstone of any democratic society," Miller said in response to the query. "We encourage all parties in

Pakistan to engage constructively and avoid violence in resolving their differences."

Whether it's the #Massacre in @PTIOfficial protest in #Islamabad or it's #Terrorism in #Pakistan, it is mostly #Pashtuns who are killed, injured & arrested. And then nobody even gives a damn about them. This has been happening for decades now. I hope @StateDeptSpox &... pic.twitter.com/IpMJkicWsK

— Jalil Afridi (@afridi-jalil) December 2, 2024

Although Miller did not explicitly express an interest in the proposed case study, his remarks highlight the United States' broader concerns about stability and human rights in Pakistan. Pashtun communities, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), have long been at the center of Pakistan's political and security challenges, grappling with decades of militancy, displacement, and underdevelopment.

The issue of Pashtun vulnerability gained international attention after major political rallies, such as those by PTI, saw casualties disproportionately

affecting Pashtun participants. Additionally, the region remains a hotspot for terrorist activities, further exacerbating the plight of the community.

Protesters  
block highway  
F.P. Report

PISHIN: Protesters in Khanozai area of Pishin district blocked the Quetta-Peshawar-Islamabad main highway during a demonstration held today to demand the release of Haji Qasim Panezai, a tribal elder who was abducted three days ago by unknown gunmen.

The blockade has caused significant disruption, leading to long queues of vehicles traveling between Quetta, Peshawar, and Islamabad. The protesters, gathered near Khanozai, pledged to continue their protest until the safe return of Haji Qasim Panezai. This has resulted in severe delays for both locals and travelers, drawing attention to the escalating tensions in the region. Haji Qasim Panezai, a well-known tribal elder, was abducted by unidentified gunmen three days ago.

The Frontier Post revisits Russian bounty story and Anthony Schinella's legacy

Jalil Afridi

WASHINGTON, D.C: During a State Department briefing on Monday, The Frontier Post posed a series of critical questions to State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller, but the most important was revisiting a buried controversy about Russian bounties paid to the Taliban. Miller acknowledged the gravity of the issues raised and stated that he would review the details and get back to The Frontier Post with a formal reply.

Revisiting Russian Bounties and Anthony Schinella

The question brought renewed attention to a significant yet controversial narrative from 2020, when The New York Times reported that Russian military intelligence had offered bounties to the Taliban for killing US soldiers in Afghanistan.

The explosive story surfaced during the final year of former President Donald Trump's administration and sparked heated debates over the handling of US intelligence.

At the center of the unfolding narrative is Anthony Schinella, a highly respected US intelligence officer whose expertise included assessing the Taliban's military strength. Schinella's death in 2020, ruled a suicide, coincided with the publication of the Russian bounty story. Articles related to Schinella were subsequently published in The Frontier Post by a member of his immediate family but were later retracted at the request of the same family member.

This unusual sequence of events, combined with Schinella's pivotal role in intelligence, raised questions about what insights the articles may have contained and why they were removed.

Mr #AnthonySchinella was top #Intelligence officer of the #US government including @CIA & @NSC.Spox. His specialty included the #Military strength of #Taliban.

Articles related to him were published in @TheFrontierPost through me obviously and I was requested to delete them... pic.twitter.com/CnSk3vMaWX

— Jalil Afridi (@afridijalil) December 2, 2024

The Frontier Post's Inquiry In the briefing, The Frontier Post asked Miller about the US government's stance on the Russian bounty allegations, stating that the publication believes the New York Times story was accurate. The publication also highlighted its role in bringing this issue to light, including publishing articles related to Schinella.

Miller confirmed that the bounty allegations were reported during the

Trump administration but stopped short of commenting on their accuracy. He assured The Frontier Post that he would review the matter and provide a more detailed response in due course.

Background on the Russian Bounty Allegations

The original New York Times report, published in June 2020, revealed that US intelligence agencies had intercepted evidence suggesting that the GRU, Russia's military intelligence agency, had incentivized Taliban fighters to target US and coalition troops in Afghanistan. The revelations sparked outrage among lawmakers, with many accusing the Trump administration of downplaying the threat to avoid further conflict with Russia.

Despite denials from Trump and Russian officials, the story was corroborated by additional intelligence

assessments reported by The Washington Post and others. The controversy reignited scrutiny of US foreign policy and the handling of intelligence related to Afghanistan.

The Frontier Post's Role in Unearthing a Buried Story

The Frontier Post's involvement in the narrative goes beyond the State Department briefing. After Schinella's death, the publication played a key role in bringing attention to his work and perspectives. However, the request to remove the articles following their publication has fueled speculation about the sensitive nature of the content and the motivations of Schinella's family member.

The publication's managing editor expressed a commitment to pursuing the truth despite the risks involved. "Journalism is purely my passion and without any agenda," the editor stat-

ed, adding that safety concerns had been raised with authorities in the US and Pakistan.

Pandora's Box of Geopolitical Intrigue

By revisiting these issues, The Frontier Post has reopened a buried story involving Russia, the Taliban, and US intelligence. The fallout could lead to renewed debates over accountability, transparency, and the hidden costs of international conflict.

Miller's forthcoming response to The Frontier Post may shed further light on the Biden administration's stance on the Russian bounty allegations, as well as the broader implications of the Schinella articles. For now, the story remains a Pandora's box of unanswered questions, with potentially far-reaching implications for US foreign policy and journalism.





## Cabinet okays special package for martyred security personnel

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif chaired 20th meeting of the provincial cabinet to discuss and decide on major agenda items.

The provincial cabinet strongly condemned brutal violence and attacks on police and rangers during PTI's violent protest on November 24, and offered Fateha for the security personnel martyred in the protest. The cabinet approved special packages for those martyred and injured in the protest. These packages include a total of Rs 29 million for the martyred constable of Punjab Police, a Rs 01 million each for police and rangers personnel injured in the brutal violence of PTI workers.

The CM said that 172 police personnel were injured during the brutal protest of PTI workers, most of them are in critical condition. She said it is shameful to see the condition of the injured personnel undergoing treatment at CMH Rawalpindi, and to note that their killers are our people. She highlighted seeing the violence, the brutality of PTI workers is evident.

The CM said the security personnel were beaten by groups with nailed sticks and rifle butts, adding that the skulls, legs and arms of the personnel undergoing treatment at CMH Rawalpindi were fractured due to the merciless violence of PTI workers' mob. The SP was beaten so mercilessly with nailed sticks that his skull and brain were damaged and his eye was swollen, she said. The CM said, "I have never seen such a display of brutality, cruelty

and violence in my life. A policeman was shot at close range, which went through his body." She lamented that the constable martyred by the violence of PTI workers has little children.

A special force of 10,000 trained security personnel will be established in Punjab to combat riots. Attacks on Dera Ghazi Khan and Mianwali check posts have increased. She directed to improve the security arrangements.

The provincial cabinet approved amendments to laws to declare kite flying a non-bailable offense, besides the approval of Punjab Enforcement and Regulatory Authority Rules 2024. It also gave approval of the formal establishment of Punjab Enforcement and Regulatory Authority, besides granting powers of hearing officers to assistant commissioners under PERA.

The cabinet congratulated Senior Minister Mariyum Aurangzeb and her team for effectively dealing with the issues of climate change and smog. The CM said, "Senior Minister Mariyum Aurangzeb and her team worked on war footing to deal with smog." The cabinet was briefed that in a survey by the renowned organization Earth People, 63 percent of the respondents appreciated the efforts of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif. It was also apprised that the farmers in Punjab have purchased agricultural inputs worth Rs 25 billion through Kisan Cards.

Farmers purchased DAP fertilizer worth Rs 16 billion through Kisan Card, she said. For the first time, there was neither shortage of fertilizer nor

increase in its prices in Punjab, she mentioned. Wheat sowing target has been set at 16.6 million acres in Punjab, 87percent of which is complete, she informed. First and unique minority card of its kind will be launched in Punjab, funds have been approved. Through the card, quarterly assistance will be given to 50,000 poor minority families across Punjab. Provincial Minister for Minority Affairs Ramesh Singh Arora thanked the Chief Minister for her remarkable arrangements for Guru Nanak Jayanti. He said, "Sikh pilgrims returned chanting slogans of Pakistan Zindabad." Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif directed the authorities concerned to take steps to establish 3 motels in Nankana Sahib.

The provincial cabinet approved interest-free loan project for the establishment of vehicle inspection and certification station. It decided to restart Horse and Cattle Show in Punjab, and approved Rs 1.5 billion for the purpose. It also allowed Punjab Police to train 210 Iraqi police officers and officials. The cabinet approved to provide latest machinery to improve performance of local bodies across Punjab. It also approved to amend Local Government Act and Punjab Local Government Works Rules, besides granting approval to build 3 three-storey towers for government employees in Chaubarji Garden. The chief minister sought a loan plan for allocating plots and houses to government employees, besides approving Foundational Learning Policy Punjab 2024.



**KARACHI:** Smoke rises as fire fighters struggle to control a fire which broke out in a multi-story Rimpia Plaza building at MA Jinnah Road. —APP Photo

## Governor Kundi visits Data Darbar

LAHORE (APP): Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) Faisal Karim Kundi on Tuesday visited Data Darbar, the shrine of famous Sufi saint Hazrat Ali Bin Usman Hajveri, commonly known as Data Ganj Bakhsh.

Faisal Karim Kundi laid a 'chaddar' of flowers on the grave and along with devotees also prayed for the progress and stability of Pakistan and durable peace in the country.

Prayers were also offered for the welfare and wellbeing of Muslim Ummah. Later on, Faisal Karim also distributed "Langar" (free meal) among the devotees.

Speaking on the occasion, the governor highlighted the significance of spiritual figures and sacred sites as an integral part of the country's cultural and social heritage. He emphasized their role in providing spiritual solace to people and fostering social harmony.

## Police hands over lost bag to owner

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) officials on Tuesday found and handed over a lost bag to its owner.

According to details, the NHMP received a call on helpline number 130 that a person lost his bag near Chakri interchange having Rs 30,000 amount artificial jewellery in the bag.

The NHMP North zone officials took immediate action on his request and after searching the area traced the bag and handed over it to him. The owner expressed his gratitude and admiration for the Motorway Police's honesty and dedication to their duty.

## Annual flower exhibition on 5th

LAHORE (APP): The Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) Lahore is set to inaugurate its highly anticipated annual chrysanthemum flower exhibition at Jilani Park on December 5.

Preparations are in full swing to showcase a stunning array of chrysanthemums cultivated through-out the year in PHA-managed nurseries. In a press statement issued here on Tuesday, Muhammad Tahir Wattoo, Director General of PHA, said that this year's exhibition promises to captivate visitors with innovative designs and vibrant displays, aligning with the vision of the Punjab Chief Minister. The event will not only highlight the beauty of chrysanthemums but also offer exceptional recreational opportunities for attendees. Director General Wattoo emphasized that the 2024 exhibition will feature an improved selection of flowers, including several unique varieties being displayed for the first time. In addition to the floral displays, PHA will inaugurate Lahore's largest nursery, further enhancing the city's green initiatives. This exhibition aims to bring nature enthusiasts, families, and tourists together, celebrating the exquisite charm of chrysanthemums and the efforts of the PHA in promoting urban greenery.

## CM reiterates his govt's resolve for empowerment of disabled persons

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Tuesday reaffirmed his commitment to inclusivity and empowerment at a special event celebrating the International Day for Persons with Disabilities 2024.

Organized by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPD), the event highlighted resilience, talent, and leadership, with this year's theme being "Amplifying the Leadership of Persons with Disabilities for an Inclusive and Sustainable Future."

The event brought together distinguished guests, including notable figures such as Haseeb Khan, Marvon Lobo, Tabish Shehzad, Ronak Lakhani, Richard Geary, and Zakaria Goodal, as well as families of individuals with disabilities.

Secretary DEPD, Taha Farooqui, lauded the chief minister's exemplary contributions to the welfare of children and individuals with disabilities, emphasising

ing the Sindh government's initiatives in health, education, training, employment, and rehabilitation.

In front of a diverse audience that included government officials, private sector representatives, and individuals with disabilities, CM Shah emphasised his government's significant progress in providing equal opportunities for persons with disabilities. He spoke passionately about various initiatives in health, inclusive education, vocational training, employment, and rehabilitation, stressing the importance of collaboration with private institutions to create comprehensive and inclusive centres.

"True inclusion is not just about participation; it's about leadership," Murad Shah said and added, "Our vision is a Sindh where persons with disabilities are empowered as decision-makers and contributors, shaping a society that values each individual's unique potential."

The event featured heartfelt performances by children with disabilities, showing

casing their extraordinary talents and determination. Certificates were also awarded to youth who completed specialised skills training programs, reinforcing the province's commitment to equipping individuals with the necessary tools to thrive.

The chief minister urged all sectors, private and civil society, to unite in creating an enabling environment for persons with disabilities. "Inclusion is not a privilege; it's a fundamental human right. Together, we can build a province where no one is left behind," he stated.

The audience applauded CM Shah's unwavering dedication to fostering inclusivity. His words resonated deeply, inspiring hope for a Sindh where diversity is celebrated and opportunities are available for all citizens.

The event concluded with a renewed pledge to prioritise inclusivity, marking another step forward in Sindh's journey toward a more equitable and sustainable future for everyone.

## WSSCK officials direct for speeding up work on uplift schemes

**F.P. Report**

KOHAT: Water and Sanitation Services Company Kohat (WSSCK) Chief Executive Officer Babar Khan Tanoli along with CIU Chief Engineer Mian Mohsin Gul visited the ongoing water supply network in College Town and reviewed the ongoing work.

On the occasion, Resident Engineer Fasihullah and Infrastructure Engineer Junaid Hassan were also present. Briefing was given a detailed to Chief Executive Officer Babar Khan Tanoli regarding the ongoing work on the field.

Chief Executive Officer Babar Khan Tanoli instructed the staff to speed up the work and redress the grievances of the people in a timely manner.

On this occasion, he also reviewed the cleanliness situation and issued orders to the sanitation staff to clean the area promptly.



## OPC vice chairperson discusses issues with senator

LAHORE (APP): Vice Chairperson of the Overseas Pakistanis Commission, Barrister Amjad Malik, met with Senator Dr. Ghaus Mohammad Khan Niazi to discuss issues faced by overseas Pakistanis, specifically concerning their residences and employment.

During the meeting, the welfare of Pakistanis working in the UK, Europe, the USA and especially in the Arab states was discussed, with a commitment to resolve the issues they or their families face abroad and in Pakistan on an urgent and priority basis.

Senator Dr. Ghaus Khan

Niazi proposed the formation of district-level overseas committees to address the problems of Pakistanis working abroad locally and expediently.

Vice Chairperson Barrister Amjad Malik informed that the Chairperson of the OPC Punjab and Chief Minister of Punjab, Maryam Nawaz had issued orders for the formation of district committees and work on this is progressing rapidly.

Barrister Amjad also shared that he had recently met with the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Shehbaz Sharif, who emphasised the need to develop a comprehensive

plan to resolve the issues of overseas Pakistanis soon.

He further said that he is grateful for the trust shown in him by the Chief Minister of Punjab, Maryam Nawaz, and that he is working tirelessly in line with her vision to improve the welfare of overseas Pakistanis.

Malik promised to visit district Khushab soon at the invitation of Senator Dr. Ghaus Mohammad Khan Niazi. He mentioned that he is a worker and maintains regular contact with Deputy Prime Minister of Pakistan Senator Ishaq Dar, under whose guidance he is carrying out all his work.

## KMU and WHO jointly organize seminar on Gender Equity



**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: A Gender Equity Seminar was held at Khyber Medical University (KMU) Peshawar in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The seminar aimed to foster dialogue on the topic of gender equity, focusing particularly on challenges faced in the fields of healthcare and education. The event was hosted by Wasif Nagi, recipient of the Sitara-i-Imtiaz, senior editor, and columnist. The Vice Chancellor of KMU, Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq, delivered the opening remarks, emphasizing the university's commitment to advancing gender equity and fostering inclusive practices. In his address, Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq highlighted KMU's initiative to introduce gender-sensitive language in the MBBS, BDS, and Allied Health Sciences curricula. This progressive step is designed to educate future healthcare professionals on the importance of equity and sensitivity in medical communication and practice, aligning with both global standards and local needs. He remarked that this seminar reflects the joint

commitment of KMU and WHO KP to integrate gender equity into healthcare education and practice, marking a significant milestone in the university's efforts to promote a more inclusive and equitable healthcare system. Dr. Muhammad Babar Alam, WHO Team Lead, also addressed the gathering, emphasizing the importance of integrating gender equity into healthcare policies and practices. He highlighted WHO's commitment to fostering inclusion and equity in the health sector and praised KMU for its proactive steps in promoting gender-sensitive approaches. Renowned gynecologist Prof. Dr. Naeema Utman and Prof. Dr. Rubina Nazli, Pro-Vice Chancellor of KMU, shared their insights, shedding light on the importance of education and awareness about gender equity and breast cancer. Former Member of the Provincial Assembly (MPA) and Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Higher Education, Madiha Nisar, and Nisar Baz, MPA from Bajaur (Awami National Party), also spoke at the event. Nisar Baz, quoting Bacha Khan, emphasized that the psychology of a nation can be

gauged from the moment of a child's birth. He called for the elimination of distinctions between boys and girls and stressed the need to address women's welfare and development. The

Provincial Ombudsperson for Harassment against Women, Rukhshanda Naz, delivered a comprehensive address on gender issues in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. She highlighted ongoing efforts, including legal frameworks, awareness campaigns, and institutional interventions, to address these challenges effectively. Dr. Sumaira Shams, former MPA and Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Health, also participated in the seminar. She emphasized the need for sustained policy efforts to empower women and ensure equity at all levels. The seminar's focal person, Dr. Maria Ishaq Khattak, Assistant Professor at KMU and a researcher specializing in gender-based violence, played a pivotal role in organizing the event. Her expertise and dedication added depth to the discussions. The seminar also featured speeches by Dr. Ijaz Hussain and other experts.

## Minister highlights govt measures for special persons

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Social Welfare and Bait-ul-Mal Department organised a prestigious ceremony on International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

The event, held at a local hotel, was attended by Provincial Minister for Social Welfare and Bait-ul-Mal Punjab, Sohail Shaukat Butt, as the chief guest. The ceremony was attended by Secretary Social Welfare Javed Akhtar Mahmood, DG Sikandar Zishan, and other department officials. Representatives from

international organizations, including the British Council, FCDO, UNFPA, Awaz II, NGOs, and special persons, also participated enthusiastically.

Addressing the attendees, Provincial Minister Sohail Shaukat Butt highlighted that for the first time in Punjab's history, a unique programme, the Humqat Card, was launched under the leadership of the chief minister to benefit special persons. He mentioned that so far, 40,000 special persons have been issued Humqat Cards, with an additional

25,000 individuals to be supported in the second phase.

Sohail Shaukat Butt elaborated that after thorough verification at their doorsteps, special persons have been provided with financial assistance of Rs. 10,500 each.

A grant of Rs1 billion has been allocated for the provision of assistive devices to special persons. Through the Humqat Card, special persons can travel for free on the Metro Bus, and steps are being taken to provide a 50% discount on private transport fares.

## Enhanced inter-departmental coordination stressed to tackle pollution

LAHORE (APP): The Environment Protection and Climate Change Department (EP&CCD) Punjab is intensifying efforts to combat air pollution through improved inter-departmental coordination.

EP&CCD Secretary Raja Jahangir Anwar and Director General EPA Punjab Imran Hamid Sheikh, along with Ms. Kanwal Liaquat, Parliamentary Secretary for Environment and Climate Change, visited the Regional Meteorological Centre (RMC) Tuesday. The delegation was warmly received by Chief Meteorologist and Director RMC Lahore, Muhammad Aleem-ul-Hassan Ramay. Representatives from the

Urban Unit and SUPARCO were also present.

The officials of the Pakistan Meteorological Department and RMC Lahore briefed the delegation on their operations, highlighting that the RMC oversees all surface observatories, meteorological offices, agrometeorological stations, seismic stations, and automatic weather stations (AWS) in Punjab. Updates were shared about the ongoing enhancement of the department's capacity, including the installation of three new weather radars. The delegation also visited the weather system observatory to observe data recording and analysis processes firsthand.

During the discussions, Secretary EP&CCD Raja Jahangir Anwar proposed

analyzing Lahore's weather patterns over the past 25 years to identify trends contributing to the rise in smog and air pollution. He highlighted the recent expansion of the department's air quality monitoring network, with 8 new Air Quality Monitoring Stations installed in Lahore and 30 across Punjab.

Speaking on the occasion, Secretary EP&CCD Raja Jahangir Anwar said, "Air pollution is a complex challenge that requires a multifaceted and collaborative approach. Leveraging data-driven strategies and integrating the expertise of institutions like Pakistan Meteorological Department, SUPARCO, and the Urban Unit will enable us to better forecast and mitigate the impacts of smog and air pol-

lution in Punjab." EPA Punjab Director General Imran Hamid Sheikh emphasized the need for actionable insights through collaboration and stated "Developing a forecasting model in partnership with key stakeholders is of vital importance to deal with emerging challenges of air pollution. This initiative will provide the actionable insights necessary to protect public health and improve environmental resilience."

The meeting concluded with a consensus to establish a robust framework for data sharing, model forecasting, and collaborative action. This initiative aims to improve Punjab's ability to address air quality challenges effectively and sustainably.





PESHAWAR: Advisor to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tourism and Culture Zahid Chanzeb presiding a progress review meeting on the annual development program.

## CPEC’s second phase to usher economic growth: Muzzammil

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister of Finance, Muzzammil Aslam, emphasized that the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will usher in a transformative era of industrial and economic development in Pakistan. Speaking at a seminar organized by the Chinese Cultural Center, China Window, and hosted by City University, Peshawar, he highlighted the immense potential of this phase to reshape the country's financial and industrial landscape.

The seminar, attended by a diverse audience, including students, academics, and professionals, featured notable speakers such as educationist Dr. Khalid Khan, Professor Dr. Gulzar Jalal, President of the Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry Rabia Basri, and China Window Administrator Amjad Aziz Malik.

The speakers shed light on CPEC's strategic importance and the opportunities it brings to uplift the nation's economy.

In his address, Muzzammil Aslam stressed the importance of leveraging the expertise of Chinese investors and industrialists to expedite Pakistan's journey toward sustainable development.

"Factories in the Rashkai Economic Zone are already operational, and their positive impacts will soon be evident," he remarked, expressing optimism about job creation and economic uplift in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He added that these industrial projects would not only improve the provincial economy but also contribute significantly to Pakistan's national growth.

Acknowledging shortcomings in the first phase of CPEC, the Advisor emphasized the need to restore investor confidence and ensure the security of Chinese stakeholders.

With investments already reaching \$30 billion and expected to surpass \$60 billion, he called for practical measures to maximize the benefits of this historic initiative.

"The onus lies on us to make the most of this golden opportunity," he said, urging policymakers to adopt a proactive approach.

Muzzammil Aslam also highlighted the pressing issue of skilled labor migration, with an estimated 1.6 million workers left Pakistan in the last two years.

He called for comprehensive planning to harness CPEC's potential for economic and social growth. "It's crucial that we build a skilled workforce to meet the demands of upcoming industries while ensuring employment opportunities for our youth," he added.

Dr. Khalid Khan underscored CPEC's role as a cornerstone for Pakistan's development, urging federal and provincial governments to accelerate its progress and address prior inefficiencies.

Meanwhile, Professor Dr. Gulzar Jalal and Rabia Basri emphasized learning from China's success in poverty alleviation and integrated planning. They called for strategic measures to tackle challenges and ensure the project's success.

The organizers of China Window reiterated their commitment to raising awareness about CPEC's importance, organizing province-wide seminars to highlight China's unwavering support for Pakistan's development. They stressed that such initiatives would help foster stronger ties between the two nations while ensuring the public is well-informed about the benefits of this transformative project.

The event concluded with City University's Dean of Health Sciences, Dr. Ismail Khan, presenting shields to the distinguished speakers, acknowledging their contributions to fostering understanding about this monumental project. The seminar served as a platform to bridge gaps, inspire collaborative action, and instill hope for a brighter economic future.

With sincere efforts and unwavering commitment, the second phase of CPEC promises to be a game-changer, paving the way for Pakistan's economic prosperity, industrial growth, and long-term development.

## PGH designs suture anchor costing only Rs 50

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Taking a revolutionary step to provide convenience to patients, Peshawar General Hospital has designed a suture anchor costing only fifty rupees instead of the 70,000 Socher anchor for use in orthopedic surgeries, which was provided to the patient during theThis locally manufactured Socher anchor made of 16

to 18 gauge cerclage wire has been successfully used during surgeries on 20 patients so far.

According to Hospital Spokesperson Rumisa Ahmed, under the leadership of Peshawar General Hospital's Head of Orthopedic Department, Dr. Khaliqur Rehman, a modern socher anchor has been designed which is provided during orthopedic surgeries.

Used in surgeries that require reattachment of soft tissue (tendons and ligaments) to bone.

She added that this anchor is made of 16 to 18 gauge cerclage wire and has been successfully used on 20 patients so far, with excellent results. Head of Bone and Joint Department and expert Dr. Khaliqur Rahman has termed this success as a great success not only for Peshawar

General Hospital but for the entire bone and joint department of Pakistan, saying that this invention is ours. Demonstrates the ability of local medical professionals to meet global standards and provide solutions to the economic challenges faced by our patients.he Said that locally developed Socher anchor marks a remarkable development in the local health system.

## Mobilizing Action Against Gender-Based Violence UN Women’s rolling resistance arrives in Peshawar

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: UN Women Pakistan's Rolling Resistance: Theatre on Wheels campaign made its impactful stop in Peshawar today at the Institute of Management Sciences (IMS) as part of the global 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. The campaign, under the theme #KoiJawaazNahi (#NoExcuse), leverages the transformative power of theatre to spark dialogue and mobilize collective action against gender-based violence (GBV).

The event brought together leaders from academia, government, and civil society. Zainab Qaiser Khan, Head of Peshawar Office, UN Women Pakistan, reiterated the campaign's transformative vision: "Through innovative platforms like Rolling Resistance, we aim to foster empathy, challenge harmful norms, and inspire action. Gender-based violence is not just a women's issue; it is a human rights crisis affecting every facet of society. Globally, one in three women experiences violence in her lifetime. GBV must end, and initiatives like these bring us

closer to a society where dignity and safety are fundamental rights for all.

Professor Atta ur Rehman from the Institute of Management Sciences, spoke about the importance of raising awareness regarding gender-based violence through a medium that resonates with the youth, "Theatre is a compelling medium to challenge societal norms and inspire change. Rolling Resistance is not just a campaign; it is a movement that empowers individuals to confront violence and promote equality."

The event captivated students and faculty with a powerful theatrical performance, followed by interactive discussions that encouraged participants to reflect on their role in fostering a safer and more equitable society. Attendees shared personal stories, amplifying

the campaign's message of solidarity and hope.

Furthermore, Rizwan Ullah, National Commission for Human Development representative, called for stronger institutional accountability. "This campaign reminds us that there is no excuse - for tolerating violence in any form. It is our shared duty as leaders, educators, and citizens to create a world where every woman and girl can live free from fear and harm," she said.

Haseena Khan, Assistant Commissioner Peshawar, highlighted the power of creative advocacy. She emphasized, "Justice for survivors and accountability for perpetrators must remain at the forefront of our efforts to combat GBV. Rolling Resistance is a vital

initiative that brings the conversation to the community level, encouraging us all to demand systemic change."

Rolling Resistance is a nationwide campaign that began in Karachi and will conclude in Islamabad, stopping in key cities to amplify its message. Aligned with Beijing+30 advocacy priorities, the campaign focuses on the campaign focuses on three critical areas: strengthening accountability through justice for survivors and holding perpetrators responsible; securing sustainable funding to empower women's rights organizations; and advancing national strategies and action plans to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls.

The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, observed from 25 November (International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women) to 10 December (Human Rights Day), is a global call to action to end GBV. Through the #KoiJawaazNahi campaign, UN Women Pakistan envisions a society where every individual can live with dignity and freedom from violence.



## Housing Department’s continue to provide better residential facilities: Amjad

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Housing, Dr. Amjad Ali, chaired the 40th meeting of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Housing Authority on Tuesday at his office in Peshawar. The meeting was attended by Secretary of Housing, Anbar Ali, Director General Imran Wazir, and other relevant officials.

During the meeting, the Secretary of Housing provided a detailed briefing to the Special Assistant on ongoing and completed housing schemes under the authority's supervision.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Amjad Ali emphasized that the responsibilities of the Housing Department have increased due to the growing population and the challenges faced by the public. He added that, under the directives of the Chief Minister, the old Peshawar Valley housing project, previously managed by the Local Government, has now been handed over to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Housing Department.

The Peshawar Valley project is a massive residential initiative by the provincial government, spanning approximately 170,000 kanals. The department is utilizing all available resources to ensure its completion.

Dr. Amjad Ali further stated that the department would complete this project in line with its other housing schemes, with a comprehensive plan already in place.

Director General of the Housing Department, Imran Wazir, informed the meeting that developmental work on the Jalojai Housing Scheme is nearly complete. He mentioned that adjacent land is being acquired under a private partnership to expand the project further.

He also highlighted that arrangements for the site office and relevant staff have been made for the Swat Dagram Housing Scheme. Given the special significance of the Peshawar Valley Housing Project, intensive measures are underway to ensure its timely completion.



## PA Body on Excise meets No negligence to be tolerated in completion of projects

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: The Standing Committee of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly on Excise, Taxation, and Narcotics Control convened its inaugural meeting at the Assembly Conference Room, presided over by Committee Chairman MPA Sajjadullah.

Attendees included MPAs Mushataq Ahmad Ghani, Azam Khan, Malik Tariq Awan, Arbab Usman, and Muhammad Yamin. The Secretary of Excise, Taxation, and Narcotics Control, accompanied by relevant officials, also participated.

During the meeting, the Secretary provided a comprehensive briefing to the committee chairman and members on the department's performance and future policies. Committee Chairman MPA Sajjadullah addressed the media, emphasizing the committee's commitment to collaborative efforts with its members to enhance the department's performance. He underscored the importance of consulting on new policies and implementing measures to further improve the department's performance.

He expressed these views while presiding a progress review meeting on the annual development program held at the office of the Secretary Tourism and Culture, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The meeting was attended by the Secretary Tourism and Culture, Director General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority, Officials from Galyat Development Authority, Directorate of Archeology Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and other senior officials. Secretary Tourism and Culture, Dr. Muhammad Bakhtiar Khan briefed the Advisor Tourism and Culture on the details of the ongoing projects under the Tourism Department. During the briefing, Advisor Tourism and Culture Zahid Chanzeb expressed his anger over the negligence of the contractor who were carrying work with slow pace in completing various development projects and issued clear orders that the contracts of all such contractors should be cancelled.

He directed the relevant sectors to be vigilant to deal with possible emergencies during the winter season and said that cameras should be installed on the roads of sensitive places to ensure smooth traffic flow.

He issued clear orders to the relevant authorities to keep the required machinery ready to avoid road closures and emergencies due to snowfall.

The Advisor on Tourism and Culture stressed the importance of planning to take concrete steps to prevent profiteering during any emergency situation during the winter season.

## Role of Paraplegic Center Peshawar hailed

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Prof Dr Ziaul Haq, Vice-Chancellor of Khyber Medical University, and Mian Muhammad Umar Member Provincial Assembly, have highly praised the pivotal role of Paraplegic Center Peshawar (PCP) and its visionary head Dr. Syed Muhammad Ilyas in the comprehensive physical and psychological rehabilitation of people with disabilities (PWDs). They emphasized that the invaluable services of such institutions become more prominent on the occasion of the International Day of PwDs. Institution like PCP, they maintained, serve as exemplary model across the country, preventing people with disabilities from succumbing to bed sores, isolation and neglect at their homes.

The dignitaries expressed these views as guests of honour at a special ceremony organized by the Paraplegic Center Peshawar in observance of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Like the rest of the country, this day was celebrated with great enthusiasm across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The event at the Paraplegic Center saw the participation of a large number of faculty heads, and students from various educational and medical institutions. Alongside the ceremony, the PCP lawn

hosted counters showcasing services provided by different organizations as well as food stalls.

The Chief Executive of the Paraplegic Center, Dr. Syed Muhammad Ilyas, highlighted significance of the day and the center's contributions in treating and rehabilitating people with spinal cord injuries, children with clubfoot, and those on the autism spectrum. He also highlighted the manufacturing of customized wheelchairs at PCP. Additionally, the Director of the Youth Ehsaas Program, Ruhullah Mishwani, elaborated KP govt initiatives for the welfare and economic empowerment of youth, especially people with disabilities.

## First Zalmi Women’s Cricket League Hazara, Peshawar win opening matches



**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: The inaugural Zalmi Women's Cricket League commenced with a grand ceremony. The official opening was conducted by Provincial Minister for Sports Syed Fakhar Jehan and Provincial Minister for Education Meena Khan Afridi.

They were accompanied by Provincial Minister for Prisons Humayun Khan, Director Peshawar Zalmi Mohammad Akram, Secretary of Higher Education Kamran Afridi, Director of Merged Districts Raziaullah, and other notable personalities.

The Zalmi Women's Cricket League is being organized collaboratively by Peshawar Zalmi, the Zalmi Foundation, and the Higher Education Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

In the opening matches Hazara defeated Bannu by 30 runs while Peshawar edged out Mardan by six runs.

Addressing the ceremony Provincial Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Syed Fakhar Jehan expressed gratitude to Peshawar Zalmi for hosting such an event for the athletes of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He reaffirmed the provincial government's commitment to providing opportunities for players regardless of circumstances, emphasizing their dedication to investing in local talent.

He highlighted the ongoing Under-16 Talent Hunt Program aimed at identifying and preparing teams across various sports disciplines for international competitions. Selected players will receive support including a monthly stipend of PKR 25,000. The minister shared his delight at seeing the participation of boys and girls in such events emphasizing the need to polish and nurture the abundant talent in the province.

He also announced cash prizes of PKR 100,000 each for the winner and runner-up teams of the league.

Speaking on the occasion, Provincial Minister for Higher Education Meena Khan Afridi praised Peshawar Zalmi's consistent efforts to highlight and develop local talent. He expressed hope for continued collaboration in organizing such activities in the future.

he added that the provincial government is taking steps to promote sports in colleges and universities. This month competitions across 14 different sports disciplines will be held among colleges and universities with over 2 thousand athletes expected to participate.





## In brief

### Unnecessary calls to Rescue 1122 F.P. Report

BUNER: Rescue 1122 issued monthly performance while disclosing of receiving 6250 unnecessary calls out of total 11744 calls during November. Rescue 1122 Buner provided services to the public in a total of 251 different accidents while the control room received a total of 11744 calls, including 5243 information calls and 6250 unnecessary calls. Rescue 1122 Buner recorded 164 medical, 44 road traffic accidents, 05 ulet injuries, 08 fire and 30 recovery incidents. As per report, 251 people were affected, 206 people were shifted to hospital after providing first aid on the spot. In these accidents/incidents, 09 patients died before reaching the hospital. Rescue 1122 Buner provided services to the public in a total of 157 different accidents, 78 emergency situations were served under the hospital-to-hospital transfer service, in which 79 patients were transferred from one district hospital to another district hospital. According to the spokesman, on the orders of Director General Dr. Ayaz Muhammad, Regional Director North Arshad Iqbal and under the leadership of District Emergency Officer Engineer Kashif Khan Yousafzai, Rescue 1122 Buner is ready to serve the public 24 hours a day as staff is always alert to serve the public and asked people to support Rescue 1122 during emergency and avoid fake and unnecessary calls.

### Elimination of corruption key F.P. Report

TAKHTBHAI: An event was held at Tehsil Municipal Administration (TMA) Hall Takhtbhai to mark Anti-Corruption Day. The event was attended by Assistant Commissioner Junaid Khalid, Additional Assistant Commissioner Abdul Ghaffar Gandapur, Tehsildar Rooh ul Amin, TMO Rehman Sher, Chief Officer Usman Ali Nashad, President of Takhtbhai Press Club, Muslim Khan Sabir, and many others from various walks of life. The speakers emphasized that corruption is a menace eroding the foundations of society and the state, and collective efforts are essential to eliminate it. Pakistan is among the developing countries striving to overcome corruption. They stressed the individual responsibility of everyone to play their part in eradicating every form of corruption in society.

### Good governance to be ensured F.P. Report

HAFAZABAD: On the directions of the Chief Minister Punjab Mariam Nawaz Sharif, Deputy Commissioner hold 'Kuli Katcheri' to address grievances of people at same place. ADCR Tanveer Yaseen, AC Hafizabad Sohail Riaz, AC Pindi Bhattian Ishfaq and other officers attended the open court. DC listened problems and complaints of people patiently and directed the officers concerned to address grievances of people at the earliest. DC said that objective to hold open court was provided relief to the people under same roof and officers were taking solid steps to address problems of the people without any delay and discriminatory. Meanwhile, Deputy Director Agriculture Hafizabad Muhammad Yousef said that farmers can play their vital role to increase per acre yield of wheat and improve National Economy to use better fertilizers, seeds and agricultural machinery while not only socio-economic condition of farmers would be improved but agriculture sector and country also be prospered.

# ATC discharges 254 persons in May 9 vandalism case

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) Mardan discharged 254 individuals from vandalism and violence on 9th May 2023 after arrest of Imran Khan by National Accountability Bureau over corruption charges, on Tuesday.

These individuals were named in FIR number 833 but the court citing lack of sufficient evidence has ordered their release. The judge of the Anti-Terrorism Court stated that there was no solid evidence against the 254 individuals and as a result, they were acquitted of the charges. Meanwhile, it was decided that legal proceedings would continue against 69 individuals and further actions will be taken against them.

Among those discharged were prominent Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders including MNA Atif Khan, MPA Tariq Aryan and renowned lawyer Nadim Shah. Additionally, the case will continue against Minister of Food Zaher Shah Tooro, MPAs Ifikhar Mishwani, Abdul Salam Afridi and Amir Farzand. Advocate Nadim Shah speaking to the media, stated that over 322 individuals had been charged in the case and 254 of them had been acquitted due to lack of evidence.

**Disable Resource Center, electric vehicles for special persons inaugurated at AWKUM:** Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan (AWKUM) observed the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. A special ceremony was held in this regard at the IBL Hall, the Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Zahir Shah as the chief guest.

Director PEDO Shahabuddin, Director ORIC Dr. Tariq Mahmood, Director IRC Imran, and Director Special Education Anwar Khan were present on the occasion. PEDO started a special eco-friendly electric car service for the disabled Parsons at the university and inaugurated a Disable Resource Center (DRC) for the disabled in the Directorate of ORIC.

Vice Chancellor and other speakers expressed on the occasion that 3rd December is celebrated as the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, in which the incidents, accidents and difficulties that occur in the lives of congenitally disabled, handicapped and special people are mentioned. The bitterness and stories that have occurred in their lives are also mentioned and sometimes their words are heard and tributes are paid to them. And then an attempt is made to solve these problems in a serious manner.

In addition, the aims and objectives of this day were explained and detailed light was

shed on the Higher Education Islamabad Policy 2021. Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Zahir Shah expressed special gratitude to Director PEDO Shahabuddin for his invaluable services for the disabled. At the end of the ceremony, shields and certificates were distributed among the participants and a special walk was organized in which a large number of special needs persons, faculty students and people from other sections of the society participated.

**Police held alleged murderer of transgender:** A few days ago, Transgender Salman (alias) Anjum was brutally murdered in the limits of Par Hoti police station during a dispute over a transaction of Rs.300.

The deceased's brother, Abdul Rehman, son of Naseeb Ahmed, Resident Gunjia Takhtbhai, filed a report of the incident against unknown persons in Par Hoti police station. On the special instructions of District Police Officer police team gained access to the main accused through secret information, advanced technology and tireless work and arrested him along with the weapon.

During the investigation, it was revealed that there was a bitter argument between the deceased Salman (alias) Anjum and the accused Mustafa over a small amount of money. Accused Mustafa Resident Shawe Adda district Swabi, present Fazal Shah village Fatima Road Mardan got angry and fired at the victim with a pistol and killed Transgender Salman (alias) Anjum. Police successfully arrested the accused and recovered a firearm from his possession.

**Govt commits to equip press clubs:** Regional Director of the Department of Information, Mardan, Shams-ul-Haq Yousafzai, has stated that the current government is taking comprehensive measures to equip all registered regional press clubs with the latest media technology facilities and requirements.

This is to ensure that regional journalists can perform their professional journalistic duties promptly and with ease. He added that the Regional Information Office, Mardan, is committed to resolving the issues faced by all registered press clubs and local journalists. He made these remarks during his visit to the Takht Bhai Press Club (Registered).

The President of the Takht Bhai Press Club Muslim Khan Sabir, along with other members, including Vice President Wahab Yousufi, Joint Secretary Javed Alam Mohmand, Finance Secretary Izzat Muhammad Khapalwak, Ibrahim Syed Yousafzai, Tariq Khan Yousafzai, Zafar Iqbal, and Matiullah, showed the director various sections of the press club building and briefed him about the issues they face.

## Admn join hands with encroachment mafias

Syed Waliullah Shah

NOWSHERA: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) central leader and focal person Peer Zulfikar Bacha has expressed deep reservations on the recent events in Nowshera and stated that the Tehsil Municipal Officer (TMO) Jahangira, Shahana Sikandar has registered false cases against the elected public representatives in order to silence them.

This he said while addressing press conference along with PML-N workers while alleged that the TMO Jahangira has been involved in massive

corruption and has failed to deliver her duties. He stated that despite the allocation of millions of rupees for development projects, the TMO has failed to provide basic amenities to the people of Jahangira. He further stated that the TMO has been allowing illegal encroachments and has been supporting the illegal businesses in the area.

Peer Zulfikar Bacha demanded that the TMO Jahangira should be immediately removed from her post. He stated that if the TMO is not removed, they will be forced to take to the streets and stage protests. He warned that if their

demands are not met, they will approach the provincial government, the chief secretary, and the opposition leader in the provincial assembly.

Peer Zulfikar Bacha also expressed his concerns over the illegal mining activities in the district. He stated that the district administration has failed to take actions against the illegal mining mafia, which is causing massive losses to the national exchequer. He demanded that the district administration should take immediate action against the illegal mining activities and ensure that the law is enforced.

## Agri-machination to increase wheat production

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: A day long awareness session with the title "Mass Mobilization for Increasing Wheat Production" was organized at Kabal Ground in Swat, under the leadership of District Director Agriculture Lower Swat Muhammad Siddique. The event aimed to educate landowners on modern production methods and techniques to boost wheat production in the region.

The program was attended by MPA Sultan Room, Assistant Commissioner Kabal Aftab Ahmed Khan, Tehsil Chairman Kabal Saeed Khan, and a large

number of landowners. Muhammad Siddique emphasized the importance of adopting good quality seeds and modern production methods to achieve high wheat production. He also highlighted the efforts of the Agriculture Department Extension Department in Lower Swat to resolve landowners' problems on a priority basis.

To support the development of oilseeds, canola and sunflower seeds were distributed among landowners. Additionally, fruit fly traps were provided to control fruit flies, and trichogram cards were distributed to protect fruit and rice

crops. Gardens of various fruit plants were also planted under the Climate Resilience Project.

MPA Sultan Room reiterated Pakistan's status as an agricultural country and emphasized the importance of creating awareness among landowners to increase production and prosperity. Tehsil Kabal Chairman Saeed Khan praised landowners as the backbone of society, acknowledging their hard work and dedication to providing food and grains. The event demonstrated the government's commitment to supporting landowners and promoting agricultural growth in the region.

## Preparations for Anti-corruption week reviewed

F.P. Report

KOHAT: In order to review progress on the duties assigned to different departments and institutions on "Anti-Corruption Week", a special meeting was held with the Additional Deputy Commissioner (Finance and Planning) Kohat in the chair at Kohat.

The meeting reviewed in detail and several important decisions were taken. Beside the Regional Information Officer Kohat Irshad Afridi,

authorities concerned of the Kohat University, Principals of various Colleges and others attended the meeting. On this occasion, all the departments and institutions briefed the meeting about the responsibilities assigned to them.

It was told that a grand seminar on the eve of Anti-Corruption Week will be held on Thursday at the District Council Hall, Kohat, followed by a walk in which people from different walks

of life will participate. Similarly, all the departments will display banners on their offices with slogans against corruption.

Besides, special programs on Corruption have also been organized in universities, colleges and schools. The Social Welfare Department has also organized a grand walk on Friday at the District Headquarters Hospital Road in which special persons will also participate.



QUETTA: Activists of Haqooq-e-Mazaroon Balochistan holding a banner to mark International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

### KP govt to assist PTI's workers held in protest F.P. Report

BUNER: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Buner president and member provincial assembly Riaz Khan has termed the Islamabad protest as peaceful and framed the party deceased's workers as martyrs of "Final Call" evoked by founding chairman Imran Khan.

This he claimed while talking to media personnel and added that PTI workers were peaceful and were protesting for the release of party's founding chairman and other workers and the repeal of the 26th Amendment. He also mentioned the affected families with assurance of cooperation and gave a clear message that the release of the arrested comrades is the responsibility of the ILF team and the party will arrange their bail and the families should not worry.

Former Advisor claimed that as many as 6000 were arrested out of them 5991 were arrested in Attock district on their peaceful return back to KPK which is completely against justice. In response to the question, he said that PTI believes in peaceful struggle and protest is a political and legal right. He claimed when the party Leadership decided, the brave workers of the Martyrs' Party will move forward with great enthusiasm and the struggle will continue to make the movement successful for the true freedom of twenty four million Pakistanis and will be successful.

Meanwhile, MPA Riaz Khan during supervising the asphalt work on the one kilometer road left at the end of the previous government in Dokda that the provincial government, although the previous government approved many projects have been completed, but despite the limited resources, small and large projects are being completed and work will be started soon on the Al-Season link bridge on the Dokda road and many projects should be completed at other places as well.

### Awareness walk held F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: Awareness walks were held in Lakki Marwat and Bannu districts on Tuesday to mark anti-corruption week. In Lakki Marwat, deputy commissioner Zeeshan Abdullah led a walk at the District Headquarters Complex Tajazai attended by additional deputy commissioners Sikandar Khan, Najibullah Khan and Habibullah Wazir, government officials and civil society activists.

The participants were carrying banners inscribed with anti-corruption messages. The education department with support of the boy scouts association also held an awareness walk in Lakki city to raise awareness against corruption.

Assistant Commissioner Yasir Nazir led the walk which started from the Government Shaheed Muhammad Ghassan Khan Centennial Model High School No 1 Lakki and culminated at Kargil Chowk on the main bus stop.

## Women with disabilities seek financial assistance

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Aawaz II programme, a British Council funded project on Tuesday arranged a function at Timergara to mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The function was attended by women with disabilities (WWDs) from different areas of the Lower Dir district. Participants of the event demanded financial assistance for WWDs, disability certificates, increase in employment opportunities, provision of free artificial limbs, wheelchairs and hearing devices.

Ms Lal Badshah, the Awaz II programme manager, highlighted the issues being faced by women with disabilities and shared the action points to be pursued by the Special Interest Group (SIG) for WWDs in the coming months. She also emphasized the social inclusion of women in the SIG. The event was part of the activities of Aawaz II, 16 days of activism campaign.

She said the SIG was a

group of 31 women with disabilities and its formation was part of the ongoing efforts to empower women, especially WWDs to overcome barriers and achieve their full potential, contributing meaningfully to their communities. She said that Aawaz II was committed to advancing the goal by empowering WWDs and ensuring their active participation in community development.

Speaking on the occasion, the SIG members said that by empowering WWDs as community leaders and experts, the Aawaz II aimed to amplify their voices and drive positive social change. Ms Salma Bibi, a local woman leader, said that women with disabilities were an integral part of the society and they deserved equal rights and opportunities. She said that they often faced barriers in access to quality education, reliable transportation, and adequate healthcare, which hindered their empowerment. "Access to essential resources like assistive

devices, including wheelchairs, is a core challenge, leaving many WWDs without mobility or independence", she asserted.

Other speakers were of the view that WWDs were human, just like everyone else, and they should not be sidelined or marginalized. The district officer of the social welfare department said the government fully supported WWDs through targeted services designed to promote inclusion and empowerment.

The official said that vocational training programs were provided to equip WWDs with practical skills for self-reliance and employment opportunities. He said that specialized schools offered tailored education to meet their unique learning needs, ensuring they can access quality education. The official claimed that wheelchairs and other assistive devices were also distributed among PWDs to enhance their mobility and independence.

## PPP marks 57th foundation day with enthusiasm

F.P. Report

PABBI: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) celebrated its 57th founding day at Pabbi bazaar Nowshera, with great enthusiasm and fervor. The event was attended by a large number of party workers, supporters and local leaders.

The ceremony was presided over by PPP Pabbi City President Mian Intiaz Ali Shah. PPP Tehsil Pabbi President Muhammad Ilyas presented a resolution, which was unanimously approved by the participants. The resolution stated that PPP Peshawar Division

President Misbah had started groupings within the party in Peshawar Division and was running party affairs without consultation. Similarly, Manwar Kamal Advocate was made president of PK-89 without consultation.

The participants of the ceremony unanimously removed both leaders from their party positions in the larger interest of the party. PPP PK-88 candidate Sajjad Iqbal Azakheli addressed the ceremony via telephone from London.

The event was also addressed by PPP

Nowshera District President Salim Khan Khokhar, Senior Vice President Saeedullah Khan, Vice President Maulana Muhammad Usman Ali Shah, General Secretary Haidar Nawaz Khan Khattak, District Information Secretary Farooq Khan Khattak, and others.

The participants of the ceremony reiterated their commitment to the party's ideology and pledged to continue the mission of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto.

## Larkana varsity academia protest continue

F.P. Report

LARKANA: University of Larkana, Officers Welfare Association (OWA) protested for the 22nd day in front of the vice chancellor's office, where the employees carried pamphlets and shouted slogans.

Addressing the sit-in protest, Officers Welfare Association President Maswar Hussain Bhutto, General Secretary Saleem Raza Sandana, Senior Vice President Zeeshan Abbasi and others protested and said that Sindh In the amount of 43 crore rupees released by the government for the university, Vice Chancellor Muhammad Usman kerio has caused serious damage to the institution due to the endless corruption, which should be investigated transparently.

The salaries have been stopped if the university management can see our attendance through the biometric system installed in the vice chancellor's office, they added that the VC of the university, Usman Kerio, has come to personal enmity with the officers, due to which he is not allowed to visit us. He does not accept the demands while the VC is rewarding his favorite people, which is completely unfair. Our legiti-

mate demands should be accepted by appointing a regular and honest vice-chancellor in his place by immediately removing Chancellor Muhammad Usman kerio so that justice can be done to us.

International Day for disabled persons observed: A seminar was organized by the National Disability Forum (NDF) at the Rehabilitation Center in Larkana in connection with the International Day of Persons with Disabilities celebrated on December 3 in Larkana.

FG President Abid Ali Lashari said that this day is celebrated every year to highlight the hidden talents of disabled people who are equal part of this society and this day shows their importance. Because people with disabilities are not different but are an important part of our society and it is important to support them at all levels, Abid Ali Lashari added that the NDF Rehabilitation Center here provides comprehensive services to mentally challenged children.

NDF Program Manager Tariq Hussain Chanhar shed light on the Sindh Government's vision of equality, which includes disability in development activities, while NDF is always striving to

provide better services at the Larkana Center, while disability cannot be cured but can be effectively managed through continuous re-habilitation, the aim of this seminar is to empower people with disabilities by the Government of Sindh in partnership with organizations like NDF.

SMBBU convocation to held 7th Dec: The sixth convocation planned by the Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Medical University (SMBBMU) Larkana, will be held on December 7 in Areeja campus instead of Chandka Medical College Larkana, for which it is expected that the Governor of Sindh Muhammad Kamran Tisoro, the chancellor of the University.

While invitations have also been issued to former vice-chancellors, around 250 MBBS have been invited to the convocation. Degrees will be given to postgraduates including MBBS, BDS, Pharmacy, nursing, while 23 gold medals will be awarded to students who have achieved clear excellence in their respective fields, including Prof. Wazir Muhammad Shaikh, Prof. Ghulam Rasool Qureshi, Prof. Bilgis Malik Prof. Noor Ahmad Baloch, Prof. Ali Akbar Sial Memorial Gold Medals will also be included.





## Spain's PM battling legal cases

MADRID (AP): Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez was reelected as secretary-general of his Socialist Party over the weekend despite corruption probes besetting his inner circle. One of Europe's longest-serving leaders, Sánchez has displayed adroit negotiating skills to stay in power since 2018, when he led Spain's only successful no-confidence motion against his conservative predecessor. Last year he defied polls to win reelection by stitching together a fragile coalition and earning another term through 2027.

But the 52-year-old Sánchez, known abroad for his dashing looks and English fluency, is being corralled by a series of legal cases - all still in the investigative phase - that have focused on a former member of his Cabinet as well as his wife and, most recently, his brother. Here's a look at the judicial onslaught that Sánchez and his party say is baseless and part of a right-wing "smear campaign."

Sánchez stunned Spain last April when he said he was taking five days from his public agenda to consider his political future after his wife, Begoña Gómez, had been placed under investigation by a Spanish judge.

He eventually announced he would stay in power and launch an effort to tackle what he called fake news that is "mudding" Spanish politics. The judge is probing allegations of influence peddling and corruption by Gómez. The allegations were made by Manos Limpias (Clean Hands), a small group whose leader has links to the far-right. The group calls itself a union and has often tried to litigate against elected officials, and even against the sister of the current king of Spain. The Socialist Party pounced on the fact that the

allegations were based on articles published by media, mostly websites, with right-wing leanings. Sánchez refused to answer questions when he was summoned by the judge, citing his prerogative as prime minister.

Gómez has also been dragged before a committee led by regional lawmakers in the Madrid region who say they are looking into her role as the director of a master's program at a public university. She denies any wrongdoing. Also under investigation is the prime minister's brother, David Sánchez. In that case, too, Manos Limpias was behind the accusations of alleged influence peddling. Last week, a judge announced she was investigating how David Sánchez was named to his post in the Department of Culture in the Badajoz provincial government in southwest Spain. David Sánchez denied any wrongdoing through his lawyer. Government spokeswoman Pilar Alegria said last week that while the government respects the separation of powers and the judicial processes, she found "suspicious similarities" between the cases involving the prime minister's wife and brother. "We are at ease because we know there is nothing to these cases," she said. Another case that has been on slow boil for several months revolves around an alleged corruption ring of business people and government officials suspected of having taken kickbacks for contracts to buy medical supplies during the COVID-19 pandemic. The scandal led to the Socialist Party expelling a former transport minister, Luis Abalos, who had been a close confidant to Sánchez until he reshuffled his Cabinet in 2021 before the scandal broke. Abalos

denies any wrongdoing and has clung to his seat in parliament, now as an independent lawmaker.

A tax evasion case against the partner of a fierce political rival of Sánchez, the conservative leader of the powerful Madrid region, has also ended up backfiring politically for the Socialists. The businessman boyfriend of Isabel Díaz Ayuso, a firebrand Popular Party politician in charge of the central Madrid region, is being investigated for not paying his fair share in taxes. But he hit back accusing state prosecutors of having violated his right to privacy for having leaked confidential financial and personal details. A court took up the complaint and is targeting Spain's top state prosecutor, who was put in his position by Sánchez's government. The top state prosecutor has defended his actions. Last week, things got worse for the Socialists when their top politician in the Madrid region stepped down after he was implicated in the possible revelation of personal information. Still, Sánchez appears to have - at least for now - the political coverage he needs to remain in charge. He maintains the support of several regional parties that have kept his coalition between his Socialists and the farther-to-the-left Sumar party muddling along.

Also helping his longevity is the fact that the only alternative to his leadership is a right-wing coalition between the Popular Party and the far-right Vox party, a prospect that is anathema to some regional parties whose support was key to Sánchez's victory last year. At the meeting of his Socialist Party, Sánchez urged optimism and hit back against his opponents: "Let the right be the ones with regrets and the ashy gray of pessimism."

## Namibia's female VP marred by problems

WINDHOEK (AP): The candidate for Namibia's ruling party led in early results of a presidential election characterized by technical problems which caused voting to be extended for three days. The opposition has rejected the results and claimed the extension was illegal, undermining the vote in a southern African country that has a largely smooth history of elections and is praised as one of the region's more stable democracies. Final results are expected this week, with opposition parties saying they will challenge the validity of the election in court.

The problems in election, which included a shortage of ballot papers and other issues, led election authorities to allow some polling stations to stay open. The issues threaten to overshadow any result, with Vice President Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah of the ruling SWAPO party a strong contender to become Namibia's first female leader. The 72-year-old Nandi-Ndaitwah, a former member of Namibia's underground independence movement, had around 56% of the vote in the partial results published. Only 220,000 of the approximately 1.4 million votes cast have been counted. Panduleni Itula of the Independent Patriots for Change opposition party is second with 27% of the vote.

Namibians voted for president and for the make-up of Parliament in a large but sparsely populated country on the southwest coast of Africa that has swathes of desert running through it. Namibia has been governed by SWAPO since independence from apartheid South Africa in 1990. While Nandi-Ndaitwah offers a chance at history, SWAPO has faced frustration from Namibians struggling with a high unemployment rate and other economic hardships, especially among young people. Government corruption scandals have tarnished its reputation as the country's liberator. The Independent Patriots for Change said it expected to file a legal challenge against the election this week. Other opposition parties said they will join the case. "It is about our country, it's about our democratic credentials, it's about the country that must work for everybody, the poor and the rich."

## Mozambique protests must go on for months: Opp leader

MAPUTO (BBC): Protests that have led to weeks of clashes with Mozambique's security forces need to continue for "maybe two to three months", the country's opposition leader has told the BBC. Venâncio Mondlane has been calling on his supporters to protest against the results of October's presidential elections, in which he came second to the candidate from the governing Frelimo party.

The weeks-long demonstrations have led to violent encounters with the police and at least 67 people have been killed, local monitoring group Plataforma Decide said. Mondlane, who is now in hiding, told the BBC he thinks pressure from the protests could force Frelimo into negotiations. "But [they] need to carry on for longer, maybe two to three months, in this same pace," Mondlane continued.

"The combination of diplomatic contact, protests and international pressure will do it." He said there is "no way" he can accept the election result, in which Frelimo's candidate Daniel Chapo won with a whopping 71% of the vote. Mondlane, an evangelical pastor who stood as an independent after breaking away from the main opposition Renamo party, got just 20%. The electoral commission denied Mondlane's allegation that the poll was rigged in favour of Frelimo, who have been in power since independence 49 years ago. But international election observers have said the elections were flawed, pointing to doctored numbers and other irregularities during the counting process. Mondlane spoke to the BBC via video call from an undisclosed location, saying he could not reveal his whereabouts for safety reasons.

He disappeared from public view on 20 October - prior to the election results being released - accusing the police of threatening behaviour not long after two of his aides were shot dead. At one point, Mondlane was hiding out in South Africa, where he said he was the target of an assassination attempt. However, Mondlane



continues to rally his supporters via social media. "What is most hurtful to me is not being able to be with the people on the streets, to take part in their fight and in their protests, to lead these demonstrations. This pains me every single day," he said. Mondlane said the police's response to the demonstrations has been "a deep violation of human rights". As a result of the death toll from the demonstrations the mortuaries in capital, Maputo, have become full. One gravedigger in the city told the BBC that the number of burials he has assisted at has also shot up. "On normal days, we conduct between six and eight burials a day," Jorge Alfredo said.

"But today, since the cemetery reopened after the demonstrations, we struggled because we had to handle double the usual number of burials." Speaking to the BBC last month, Mozambique's police commander Bernadino Raphael blamed Mondlane's supporters for the deaths. "They are using children as shields in front of them while they remain behind," he alleged. The commander added that in many instances police had no choice but to defend themselves from protesters who had unleashed violence, including killing

six officers and looting and burning property and vehicles. Protesters appear determined to carry on, however. Recently, they have responded to some of Mondlane's more creative ideas for demonstrations, such as banging pots and pans indoors at the same time every night and parking their cars on the streets to block traffic for several hours throughout the day. The ruling party are feeling the pressure, Mondlane believes.

"Frelimo knows that if these protests carry on, there's a huge risk that the country will become unfeasible," he said. After the result was announced on 24 October, Chapo was adamant that he and Frelimo had won in a free and fair contest, saying: "We are an organised party that prepares its victories." And if Frelimo do not concede and instead choose to progress with their five-year term? Mondlane believes that if the electoral process is reformed to make it more transparent then he will win the 2029 presidential election. "Because the economic and social situation is so bad, there's no way that this regime will manage to improve the situation in the next five years," he said. "I dare say that we will win, without a doubt."

## How Zelenskyy shifted goals to end Russia war?

KYIV: President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said over the weekend that he seeks an early end to the war with Russia, adding Ukraine could retake occupied land later through diplomacy if Kyiv's NATO membership is certain. This marks a shift from his earlier stance, where he said the end of the war was contingent on Russia returning seized Ukrainian territory.

In an interview with Sky News chief correspondent Stuart Ramsay, published on November 29, Zelenskyy said the "hot phase" of the war could end if NATO offered security guarantees for the part of Ukraine currently under Kyiv's control. He said the return of land occupied by Russia at the moment could be diplomatically negotiated later. The Ukrainian leader reiterated this stance in an interview published by the Japanese news agency Kyodo News.

"If we want to stop the hot phase of the war, we need to take under the NATO umbrella the territory of Ukraine that we have under our control," he told Sky News. "We need to do it fast. And then on the

[occupied] territory of Ukraine, Ukraine can get them back in a diplomatic way," he said. He told Sky News that the ceasefire needs to guarantee that Russian President Vladimir Putin does not return to take more territory. Russia has taken about 20 percent of Ukrainian territory since 2014. This includes Crimea, which Russia annexed in 2014. Since February 2022, when Putin launched the full-fledged invasion of Ukraine, Russia has taken over large chunks of Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhia, and announced the annexation of these regions in September 2022. Yes, Zelenskyy's recent interviews mark the first time he has laid out a plan for the end of the war that does not involve Russia returning seized territory to Ukraine as a condition. "This is a major compromise by Zelenskyy over territory for sure, but I think it reflects the harsh reality," Timothy Ash, an associate fellow in the Russia and Eurasia programme at Chatham House, a London-based think tank, told Al Jazeera. Before this, Zelenskyy had stressed that

a peace deal would not go through unless Russia's annexation of Ukrainian territories was nullified. In July, he told French outlet Le Monde that the seized territories could join Russia if they voted to do so in a free and fair referendum. However, to conduct this referendum, Ukraine would need to regain hold of these territories. Zelenskyy made a rare admission to Kyodo News that it would be difficult for the Ukrainian army to retake land grabbed by Russia through military means. "Our army lacks the strength to do that. That is true," he said. "We do have to find diplomatic solutions."

His statements also come soon after Republican leader Donald Trump won the United States election last month. Trump's election marks a shift in the US approach towards Ukraine. The US under President Joe Biden has been the largest provider of military aid to Ukraine. According to the US State Department, Washington has provided \$64bn in military aid to Ukraine since February 2022.

## Georgian opposition leader held

TBILISI: Georgian police have arrested prominent opposition leader Zurab Japaridze after using water cannon and tear gas to disperse tens of thousands of antigovernment protesters who refused to back down over the government delaying talks on joining the European Union.

Japaridze's arrest comes as Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze accused the opposition of "coordinated violence" aimed at overthrowing the constitutional order. The Coalition for Change, the country's largest opposition party, confirmed Japaridze's arrest early in a post on X.

"Japaridze was fleeing together with other protesters as he was grabbed, indicating this was a conscious, targeted move by the regime," the statement said. Footage showed Japaridze being placed in an unmarked vehicle by masked police. It was unclear if he would be charged with any offence. The ongoing protests in Georgia were prompted by the government's announcement last week that it was suspending talks on joining the EU. Critics saw that as confirmation of a Russian-influenced shift away from pro-Western policies, something the ruling party denies. The United States and the EU have voiced alarm at what they see as democratic backsliding by Georgia, a country of 3.7 million people that lies at the intersection of Europe and Asia and was once part of the Soviet Union. Russia denies interfering in its neighbour's affairs, but former President Dmitry Medvedev warned that Georgia was "moving rapidly along the Ukrainian path, into the dark abyss". — Al Jazeera

## Fianna Fáil emerges as largest party in Irish election

DUBLIN (BBC): Fianna Fáil has won the most seats in the Dáil (lower house of parliament) following the Republic of Ireland's general election. It won 48 seats while Sinn Féin - the main opposition party in the last Dáil - won 39.

Fine Gael, which has been in coalition with Fianna Fáil since 2020, was third with 38 seats. Those two parties seem best placed to form a new government, but Sinn Féin insists it will still be involved in the coalition talks. Candidates fought it out for 174 seats in the Dáil, with 88 needed to secure a majority. Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael combined have 86. First preference percentage share for the largest three parties was: Fianna Fáil 21.9%, Fine Gael 20.8%, Sinn Féin 19.0%. Turnout for the election was 59.7%, the lowest in more than a century.

Fianna Fáil's deputy leader Jack Chambers told RTE's Morning Ireland that he did not expect a new government to be formed before Christmas. But he said he did not expect talks to take five months like the last time. Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael's junior coalition partner, the Green Party, had a disappointing election, dropping from 12 seats to just one. To return to government, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael have a number of options, including

doing a deal with Labour or the Social Democrats - who each won 11 seats - or trying to strike an agreement with the right-wing party Independent Ireland, which has four seats. Another option would be to work with a combination of some of the 16 independent politicians, two Aontú TDs (MPs) or the single TD from the 100% Redress Party. The frontrunner to be the next taoiseach (Irish prime minister) is Fianna Fáil leader Micheál Martin. Nothing at this stage can be ruled out as weeks, if not months, of political talks are now likely.

Labour TD Marie Sherlock said her party would not go into government with Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael alone without other smaller parties. "There is no circumstance that I can envisage that the Labour Party will be going into government with Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. We can only form a basis for negotiation if we're with other small parties," Sherlock told RTE. Eoin Ó Broin, Sinn Féin TD for Dublin Mid West, said his party was keen to talk to other "progressive parties". He emphasised that "no deal has been done yet". "Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael clearly would prefer to go in with each other, despite the cost that it'll have for the general population but they haven't formed a government yet," he said. "It's

incumbent on us to meet with other likeminded parties to see how we can ensure that those really urgent pressing issues for people, housing, health-care, cost of living, remain at the centre of the agenda." Chambers, who was re-elected in the Dublin West constituency, said his party was "very clear" on its position with Sinn Féin. "There is no common ground when it comes to substance in policy," he added. Speaking to the BBC's Good Morning Ulster, he said: "We're going to significantly increase our representation here in the capital of Dublin and indeed across the country. "And we will have a greater level of representation in the next Dáil than we did in the last one, and that's having served in government when we had serious economic challenges." Among the new TDs is Fine Gael's Emer Currie. The former Irish senator is a daughter of the late Northern Ireland politician Austin Currie, who co-founded the Social Democratic and Labour Party. "He would have been absolutely delighted," Currie told Good Morning Ulster, adding that her election was a "very special" moment for her whole family.

With her party in line to return to government, Currie said the result of the election seemed to indicate

that the public was content with the status quo. "It's a statement that they felt that Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil were working well together," she said. Meanwhile, Cian O'Callaghan, deputy leader of Social Democrats, said there was a "possibility of a coalition with left parties in it" but due to the results so far, a left only government would not be possible.

Callaghan has been re-elected in Dublin Bay North. Responding to claims that the left failed to coalesce their argument before the election, O'Callaghan said: "I think every party needs to stand on their own two feet and make the case to the electorate as to why people should vote for them." The reason we have different parties is because there is differences and it gives people a different choice as well in the election."

The Green Party will be "very disappointed" in their results according to Lisa Keenan, assistant professor of political science at Trinity College, Dublin. "They were going into in this election with 12 seats, they've lost all but one," she said. "They were perceived to be lucky to hold on to that one - that's the seat of their leader Roderic O'Gorman. "And I think for them it's a little bit tough to take in a sense that in government they achieved many, many important policy wins."

## Belgium ordered to pay reparations for kidnappings

BELGIUM (AFP): A Belgian court has ordered the government to pay reparations to five mixed-race women who were forcibly removed from their families in the colonial-era Belgian Congo. The women, now in their 70s, were taken from their mothers when they were young children and placed in orphanages under a state policy.

The court said the government had a "plan to systematically search for and abduct children born to a black mother and a white father". Judges called this a crime against humanity and said the kidnappings were "an inhumane act of persecution". The Belgium government in 2019 issued a formal apology to an estimated 20,000 victims of forced family separations in DR Congo, as well as

Burundi and Rwanda. DR Congo was governed by Belgium as a colony from 1908 to 1960. Monique Bitu Bingi, Léa Tavares Mujinga, Noëlle Verbeken, Simone Ngalula and Marie-José Loshi launched a legal case for compensation in 2021. They were all taken by the state under the age of seven and placed in orphanages mainly managed by the Catholic Church. Bitu Bingi had previously told AFP news agency: "We were destroyed. Apologies are easy, but when you do something you have to take responsibility for it." Their legal fight succeeded in the Brussels Court of Appeal which overturned an earlier court's ruling which found too much time had passed for them to be eligible for reparations.

As the court ruled the state's actions a crime

against humanity, this removed any statute of limitations.

"The court orders the Belgian State to compensate the appellants for the moral damage resulting from the loss of their connection to their mother and the damage to their identity and their connection to their original environment," the judges said. The women had asked for an initial payment of 50,000 (€41,400).

This is the first case in Belgium to have highlighted the estimated 20,000 children born to white settlers and local black women who were forcibly removed from their families during the 1940s and 1950s. Most white fathers refused to recognise their mixed-race children or acknowledge paternity, and the children also did not automatically receive Belgian nationality.

## Vietnamese tycoon in race to raise \$9b to avoid execution

HANOI (BBC): Vietnamese property tycoon Truong My Lan is in a race for her life. On Tuesday, the 68-year-old will hear the verdict in her appeal against the death sentence handed down on her in April for masterminding the world's biggest bank fraud. It was a rare and shocking verdict - she is one of very few women in Vietnam to be sentenced to death for a white collar crime.

However, the law in Vietnam states that if she can pay back 75% of what she took, her sentence will be commuted to life imprisonment. In April a trial court found she had secretly controlled Saigon Commercial Bank, the country's fifth biggest lender, and taken out loans and cash over more than 10 years through a web of shell companies, amounting to a total of \$44 billion (£34.5 billion). Of that prosecutors say \$27 billion was misappropriated, and \$12

billion was judged to have been embezzled, the most serious financial crime for which she was sentenced to death. Can Truong My Lan return \$9bn before she is executed? During her trial, she was sometimes defiant, but in the recent hearings for her appeal against the sentence she has been more contrite. She has said she was embarrassed to have been such a drain on the state, and that her only thought was to pay back what she had taken. Born into a Sino-Vietnamese family in Ho Chi Minh City, Truong My Lan started as a market stall vendor, selling cosmetics with her mother. She began buying land and property after the Communist Party introduced economic reform in 1986. By the 1990s, she owned a large portfolio of hotels and restaurants. When she was convicted and sentenced in April, she

was the chairwoman of a prominent real estate firm, Van Thinh Phat Group. It was a dramatic moment in the "Blazing Furnaces" anti-corruption campaign led by then-Communist Party Secretary-General, Nguyen Phu Trong. All of the remaining 85 defendants were convicted. Four were sentenced to life in jail, while the rest were given prison terms ranging from 20 years to three years suspended. Truong My Lan's husband and niece received jail terms of nine and 17 years respectively. The State Bank of Vietnam is believed to have spent many billions of dollars recapitalising Saigon Commercial Bank to prevent a wider banking panic.

The prosecutors argued that her crimes were "huge and without precedent" and did not justify leniency. Truong My Lan's lawyers say she is working as fast as

she can to find the \$9 billion needed. But cashing in her assets is proving difficult. Some are luxury properties in Ho Chi Minh City which could, in theory, be sold quite quickly. Others are in the form of shares or stakes in other businesses or property projects. In all the state has identified more than a thousand different assets linked to the fraud. These have been frozen by the authorities for now. The BBC understands the tycoon has also reached out to friends to raise loans for her to help reach the target. Her lawyers are arguing for leniency from the judges on financial grounds. They say that while she is under sentence of death it will be hard for her to negotiate the best price for selling her assets and investments, and so harder for her to raise \$9 billion. She can do much better if under a life sentence instead, they say.



The Frontier Post

Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

Printed and published by Mahmood Afridi at Moraka's Printers, 27 Abdara Road, University Town, Peshawar.

Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001

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

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

USA and Canada Toll Free Number 1-800-5905747

## Syrians need a state, not perpetual civil war

MANY across the Middle East will be apprehensive that just as one conflict appears to be subsiding in Lebanon, a supposedly frozen civil war in Syria has rapidly thawed. This week's lightning offensive by anti-government rebels that routed government forces in north-west Syria is a sobering reminder that failing to comprehensively resolve conflicts often leaves a powder keg that can explode at any time.

Although many civilians who fled to Idlib after the Syrian government's violent retaking of Aleppo in 2016 say they are happy that they can now return to their homes, reports of other civilian convoys fleeing the city – the site of so much suffering eight years ago as well as during the 2023 earthquake – will alarm many, particularly given that the rebel coalition has worrying links to extremism.

Hayat Tahrir Al Sham, which launched the offensive, was formerly aligned with Al Qaeda but says it split from the terrorist organisation in 2016. It consists of several militant factions, but in recent years has reportedly tried to distance itself from extremism. But this effort, according to the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, is more of a rebranding than a "genuine change in ideology".

That government lines broke so quickly suggests that the armed forces were taken by surprise despite the months of preparation that would have gone into the rebel offensive. This highlights a key problem in ending Syria's war once and for all: the lack of an agreed and robust political system able to oversee a territorially contiguous state whose writ runs to all parts of the country. As things stand, Syria remains fragmented, divided into zones of influence dominated either by state forces or militias of different stripes – all of which enjoy the support of various foreign powers.

Much of the Arab world's reaction to the renewed fighting in Syria has focused on this problem. President Sheikh Mohamed held a phone call on Saturday with Syrian President Bashar Al Assad during which he emphasised the UAE's solidarity with the Syrian state, its support in combating terrorism and extremism as well as the need to support efforts aimed at preserving Syria's unity and sovereignty. Similarly, Ayman Safadi, Jordan's Minister of Foreign Affairs, said that his country backed Syria's territorial integrity. Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al Sudani said that Syria's security and stability were directly linked to Iraq's national security.

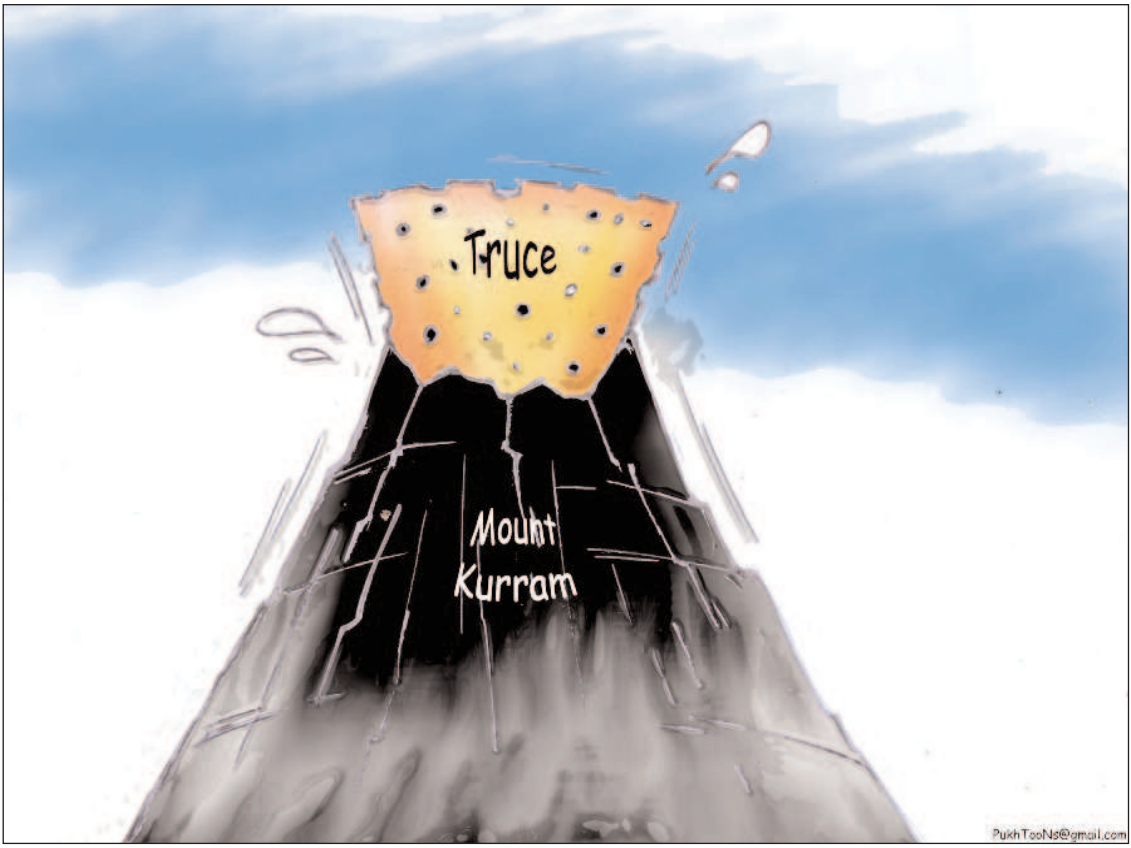
On Sunday, the US, Britain, France and Germany issued a joint statement that said the current escalation "only underscores the urgent need for a Syrian-led political solution to the conflict". Geir Pedersen, the UN's special envoy for Syria, has called for a political process to implement Security Council resolution 2254, a unanimously adopted text from December 2015 that calls for a nationwide ceasefire, confidence-building measures and steps to address terrorism. They are right to do so.

Countries embroiled in the conflict, such as Russia and Turkey, should play their part in bringing it to an end. The alternative is to be invested an unending process of political and military involvement. No one is suggesting that a negotiated end to the war is going to be easy; there have been too many unsuccessful attempts to in the past – see the deadlocked state of the Astana Process, the trilateral forum led by Turkey, Russia and Iran. Nevertheless, what Syria's people need and deserve is a genuine peace process.

Whether the events of this week turn out to be a game changer that leads to a political reordering in Syria remains to be seen, but what is clear is that accepting the status quo of a frozen conflict is not an option – if it ever was.

### Important Notice

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



## Palestinian journalists deserve international protection

BRITISH Foreign Secretary David Lammy was quizzed last week in front of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee of the House of Commons. At one stage, he opined: "There are no journalists in Gaza."

One can maybe attribute this to carelessness, thoughtlessness. Lammy should formally correct the record. I am in no doubt the foreign secretary knows full well that Israeli forces have killed scores of Palestinian journalists in Gaza, at least 137 of them so far. This is in fact the deadliest conflict for journalists since the Committee to Protect Journalists started gathering data in 1992. The committee is also looking into a further 130 possible cases of killed journalists. Another human rights group calculated that, in the Syrian war, an average of 63 journalists were killed a year, the next-highest death rate for journalists this century. In the Iraq war, the figure was six a year.

Many journalists in Gaza have been seriously injured as well. If Israel's allies were to show concern for journalists, perhaps they could intervene and push Tel Aviv to allow Palestinian cameraman Fadi Al-Wahidi to travel for medical treatment. He

was shot by Israeli forces in October and lies in a coma.

They could also urge Israel to allow foreign journalists to enter Gaza, as many working for major international outlets have been seeking. Typically, they would go in and link up with Palestinian journalists, who would assist them in their work. That might help verify the war crimes that some leaders doubt have been committed in Gaza.

Perhaps these governments could also call for independent investigations into the deaths of journalists. Media workers are entitled to protection under international law, just like civilians. But no. They could back the complaints made to the International Criminal Court about Israel's killing of journalists and demand that the court investigates. But no. They appear to be allergic to investigations and proper accountability, at least where Israel is concerned.

Remember, as yet, nobody has been held accountable for the 2022 killing of Shireen Abu Akleh, the Palestinian American journalist who was shot dead in Jenin. Even though Israel was forced to concede one of its soldiers had shot her, accountability has not followed. In fact, Israel has never put any of its sol-

diers on trial for killing a journalist, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists.

So, it appears that the mindset of many politicians and media figures in Europe and the US is that Palestinian journalists in Gaza do not count. They are treated as unreliable, incapable of doing a professional job. This attitude is contemptuous and disrespectful of those journalists and their families who have been killed, in some cases clearly assassinated.

Pretty much the same attitude applies to aid workers. Palestinian aid workers, including UN staff, have been killed in horrifying numbers in Gaza. Yet it was only the April killing of international aid workers employed by World Central Kitchen that made front-page news.

At a broader level, many Western governments simply do not acknowledge the reality of Israel's carnage and typically belittle the crimes involved.

In contrast, Israeli media outfits do count. Israeli journalists are treated with respect, even those who have made genocidal comments.

Imagine if the situation were the other way round, if Hamas had deliberately killed Israeli or interna-

tional journalists. Well, on Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas did kill four Israeli journalists, but of course those attacks have been properly condemned pretty much every day since.

The evidence shows that Palestinian journalists have done an incredible job, with many winning awards for their work. They have operated in the most appalling of circumstances in Gaza. They are targeted. As one told me, when Palestinians in Gaza see a journalist, they do not want to go near them. If your phone rings, you move away from everyone else. They know that, at any moment, an Israeli missile could be on its way with their name on it.

The most terrifying element is that this could be the future. Maybe if the atrocities continue, Israel will see to it that there are no more Palestinian journalists left in Gaza. Then where will we get the real story from? This may only suit Israel's friends.

Journalism matters. Rather than ignoring the plight of Palestinian journalists, international actors should be encouraging them and supporting them, from providing training to ensuring their safety. Attacks on the media have become a part of war and this should be called out, with those responsible held to account.

## Gaza genocide reveals the limits of Israeli propaganda

THE ongoing genocide in Gaza is unprecedented. Nothing that Israel and its supporters can say or do will avoid its culpability for the attempted extermination of the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip. This assertion is critical, both for ending the Israeli occupation of Palestine and achieving Palestinian freedom.

In all its past wars and related war crimes, Israel has managed to push the reset button in its relationship with occupied Palestinians. Following each war, the Israeli hasbara (propaganda) machine would start – utilizing the always-willing Western mainstream media – painting Palestinians in a negative light and presenting Israel, a country that is supposedly in a permanent state of self-defense, as the victim or even the lone defender of Western civilization.

This campaign always runs parallel to the white-washing of Israel in popular entertainment, from Hollywood movies to TV sitcoms and magazine covers with titles such as "Gorgeous photos capture the unseen lives of female soldiers in Israel."

Generally, Western politicians of various ideologies, along with intellectuals, talking heads on news programs and church leaders, all praise the wonder that is Israel.

At the beginning of Israel's genocidal war on Gaza in October 2023, for example, British playwright Tom Stoppard said that, "before we take up a position on what's happening now, we should con-

sider whether this is a fight over territory or a struggle between civilization and barbarism." He, of course, leaned toward the latter.

This Israeli tactic always includes the demonization of Palestinians, with the victim becoming the terrorist and those under siege become the besiegers. This last claim, in particular, was expressed by US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in 2000, when she said that "the Israelis feel under siege from the Palestinian rock throwers and the various gangs that have been roaming around."

So, why will those same Israeli tactics fail this time? It will certainly not be due to Israel's lack of trying. In fact, it is already bracing for the fight of a lifetime.

One new tactic that Israel is already employing in "friendly" countries like the US is pressuring lawmakers to pass legislation that blocks any conversation about the genocide in Gaza.

The US House of Representatives last month passed H.R. 9495, known as the Stop Terror Financing and Tax Penalties on American Hostages Act. It proposes giving the treasury secretary the authorization to revoke an organization's tax exempt status and decide when the designation would end. If it passes the Senate and is approved by the president, the most democratic and peaceful expressions of rejecting the Israeli occupation of Palestine and demanding sensible US foreign policy will be equated with a

direct violation of the law and, in some cases, terrorism – as defined by the Department of Treasury at the behest of the pro-Israeli lobby.

But even desperate attempts such as this will not quell the anger or distract from the conversation for the following reasons:

One, not only is Israel committing genocide in the Gaza Strip, but this genocide is being investigated and acknowledged by the world's most prominent legal institutions, namely the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court.

Two, unlike previous investigations – such as the Goldstone Report into the 2008-09 war on Gaza – the international community has already taken some practical steps to hold Israeli war criminals accountable. These include the International Criminal Court arrest warrants issued last month against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant.

Three, those who routinely come to Israel's defense, including the US and other Western governments, are now directly clashing with the very international laws they helped articulate after the Second World War, depriving them of any credibility as supposed neutral parties in this conflict.

Four, despite the inherent bias of Western media, Palestinian journalists have, despite being isolated and killed in large num-

bers, managed to communicate the genocide to the rest of the world, making it impossible for Israel to hide its crimes.

Five, the impact of the Israeli genocide on Gaza has already penetrated public opinion worldwide in an unprecedented manner. Previously, the conversation on Palestine had been confined to specific strata of society, reaching mainly academics, social justice activists and other groups interested in politics and global issues. Today, however, ordinary people have been made aware of the conversation, to the extent that it is widely believed that anger over Gaza contributed to determining the outcome of the latest US presidential election.

In Africa, the growing political and public interest in the Palestinian struggle has re-enlivened the spirit of anticolonial liberation struggles on the continent, bringing many countries back to the front lines of global solidarity.

No amount of Israeli propaganda, unjust laws, unfair categorizations of Palestinians or pictures of scantily-clad members of the Israeli army will ever succeed in reversing these realities.

Now, there can be no reset button. Rather, the global momentum of Palestine's liberation will accelerate in the coming months and years.

The toll exacted on the Palestinian people for this earth-shattering moment has been painful, but the history of all national liberation struggles, Palestine included, demonstrates that the price of freedom is always high.

## Sardar Ayaz Sadiq's Moscow Visit and Pakistan-Russia Collaboration

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

THE parliamentary relationship between Russia and Pakistan has experienced remarkable growth, particularly during the tenure of Sardar Ayaz Sadiq as Speaker of the National Assembly of Pakistan. His proactive diplomatic outreach and commitment to fostering bilateral ties have significantly elevated the scope and depth of collaboration between the two nations. A notable milestone in this relationship was Speaker Sarsar Ayaz Sadiq's official visit to Moscow from November 27 to 29, 2024, on the invitation of H.E. Vyacheslav Volodin, Chairman of the State Duma of the Russian Federation.

Leading a delegation of parliamentarians, including Rana Muhammad Hayat Khan, Abdul Qadir Patel, Syed Agha Rafiullah, Dr. Muhammad Farooq Sattar, and Sher Ali Arbab, Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq embarked on this visit to strengthen parliamentary ties. The delegation was warmly received by Vice Chairman of the State Duma, Alexander Babakov, signifying the respect Russia extended to Pakistan's parliamentary leadership. This visit reflected the mutual desire to expand cooperation in areas such as economic development, counterterrorism, and cultural exchange.

A significant achievement of the visit was the signing of an Agreement on Cooperation between the State Duma and the National Assembly of Pakistan. During his meeting with Chairman Volodin, Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq emphasized

Discussions encompassed vital areas like food security, economic partnerships, and counterterrorism, showcasing the comprehensive approach adopted by both countries in fostering bilateral ties. The delegation's visit also included a poignant moment of remembrance when Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Alexander Garden, near the Kremlin wall. Accompanied by Vasily Piskarev, Chairman of the State Duma's Committee on Security and Anti-Corruption, this tribute to the fallen heroes of World War II underscored the shared values of resilience and respect for historical sacrifices. An essential dimension of the visit was the focus on interfaith harmony and cultural cooperation. In a meeting with Professor Damir Mukhetdinov, Deputy Chairman of the Council of Muftis, Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq commended Russia's stance against Islamophobia and praised President Vladimir Putin's respect for religious diversity. He acknowledged the growing camaraderie between Russia and the Muslim world and emphasized the importance of interfaith dialogue in fostering understanding and unity.

The unprecedented level of cooperation already established between the two legislatures. Chairman Volodin highlighted the agreement as a foundation for exploring innovative formats of collaboration to address shared challenges and enhance mutual benefits. Discussions encompassed vital areas like food security, economic partnerships, and counterterrorism, showcasing the comprehensive approach adopted by both countries in fostering bilateral ties.

The delegation's visit also included a poignant moment of remembrance when Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Alexander Garden, near the Kremlin wall. Accompanied by Vasily Piskarev, Chairman of the State Duma's Committee on Security and Anti-Corruption, this tribute to the fallen heroes of World War II underscored the shared values of resilience and respect for historical sacrifices.

An essential dimension of the visit was the focus on interfaith harmony and cultural cooperation. In a meeting with Professor Damir Mukhetdinov, Deputy Chairman of the Council of Muftis, Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq commended Russia's stance against Islamophobia and praised President Vladimir Putin's respect for religious diversity.

He acknowledged the growing camaraderie between Russia and the Muslim world and

emphasized the importance of interfaith dialogue in fostering understanding and unity. Both sides expressed a commitment to enhancing cultural and religious exchanges, further strengthening ties beyond political and economic realms.

Global issues also featured prominently during Speaker Sadiq's engagements in Moscow. He condemned the ongoing brutality in Palestine, expressing solidarity with its people and calling for collective international efforts to address the crisis. Such expressions of empathy highlighted Pakistan's broader commitment to justice and peace in the global arena.

Speaker Sadiq's tenure as Speaker of the National Assembly was marked by other key initiatives that bolstered Pakistan-Russia relations. Earlier, he hosted Russian parliamentary delegations in Islamabad, facilitating discussions on trade, economic collaboration, and legislative exchanges. These engagements emphasized the mutual respect and shared goals underpinning the bilateral relationship. Additionally, during international parliamentary conferences, Speaker Sadiq consistently advocated for Pakistan-Russia energy cooperation, regional connectivity, and counterterrorism efforts, paving the way for joint ventures and collaborative solutions to shared challenges.

Multilateral forums also served as a platform for advancing common interests. Pakistan and Russia jointly championed issues like counterterrorism and regional stability, reinforcing their

partnership in addressing global and regional challenges. The exchange of parliamentary delegations during Speaker Sadiq's tenures underscored the shared commitment to fostering mutual understanding and creating opportunities for deeper engagement.

The Moscow visit concluded with Speaker Sadiq extending a formal invitation to Chairman Volodin to visit Pakistan. This gesture demonstrated his vision for sustained dialogue and engagement, essential for nurturing long-term relations between the two nations.

The invitation reflected the Speaker's dedication to elevating parliamentary diplomacy as a cornerstone of bilateral relations.

Under Sardar Ayaz Sadiq's leadership, Pakistan's parliamentary diplomacy has emerged as a vital instrument in strengthening international partnerships. His emphasis on dialogue, mutual respect, and collaboration has not only deepened ties with Russia but has also set the stage for a more robust and comprehensive relationship.

The progress achieved during his tenure is a testament to the power of parliamentary diplomacy in addressing global challenges and fostering mutual understanding. As Pakistan and Russia continue to build on this foundation, their partnership holds the promise of greater achievements in the years to come.



# Israel and the ICC: A legal scholar’s response to The Washington Post

ON November 24, The Washington Post’s editorial board published a piece in which it laid out its views on the arrest warrants for Israeli officials recently issued by the Pre-Trial Chamber of the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Reading it as a legal scholar, I found it full of misinformation and misrepresentation of facts. It is unclear whether the editorial was an attempt to mislead the readers or reflected the board’s significant lack of knowledge and research abilities on ICC-related matters – or both.

In any case, the article merits a response that lays out the facts and points out the misrepresentation.

At the outset, the article suggests that the ICC has failed to address international crimes in Syria, Myanmar and Sudan. This is manifestly nonfactual.

The default grounds for the ICC to exercise jurisdiction is the commission of international crimes on the territory or by the nationals of either a state party to the ICC or a non-state party that has accepted the jurisdiction of the court. The three states referred to neither joined the ICC nor accepted its jurisdiction.

The court exercises jurisdiction in Sudan based on a United Nations Security Council resolution that referred the case to the court in 2005 – as is its right under the Rome Statute, the treaty that established the ICC. Since then, the ICC has actively engaged with the situation in Sudan, issuing seven arrest warrants and pursuing six cases.

The Post is concerned with the conduct of the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces but mentions nowhere in its editorial that Ali Muhammed Ali Abd-Al-Rahman, one of the leaders of its constituent militia, the Janjaweed, is already in ICC custody and standing trial. It also omits

ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan’s assertion that his office is still investigating ongoing crimes.

On Myanmar, the Office of the Prosecutor opened preliminary examinations in 2018. After only one year, the Pre-Trial Chamber authorised it to open an investigation. On November 27, the Office of the Prosecutor applied for an arrest warrant against the head of Myanmar’s military government, Min Aung Hlaing.

To do this, both Khan’s office and the Pre-Trial Chamber pushed the limits of the legal text to adopt unorthodox, precedent-setting interpretations of the law with a view to overcoming the jurisdictional challenge in the absence of a UN Security Council referral.

Both ICC organs concurred that although the crimes of “deportation” and “persecution” were perpetrated by nationals of a non-state party and on the territory of a non-state party (Myanmar), the “conduct” constituting the crimes forced the victims into the territory of a state party (Bangladesh); consequently, the ICC should have jurisdiction because the crimes have been committed “in part” on a territory of a state party.

Despite the lack of grounds to exercise jurisdiction in Syria, former Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda indeed strived to address these crimes. Her office came up with a creative approach to examine acts committed by nationals of states parties but ended up with a very narrow scope of perpetrators and crimes.

There is no ICC “failure” to address crimes committed in Syria; rather, there is a Security Council failure to refer the Syria case to the ICC, as it did with Libya and Sudan. It is appropriate then to criticise the Security Council system, including the United States’s decades-long abuse of its veto powers, for instance, to shield

## Abdelghany Sayed

Israel.

The Post uncritically reproduces a regular Israeli and US talking point: that Israel as “a democratic country that is committed to human rights” is capable of investigating its own security forces. The ICC should not put “elected leaders of a democratic country with its own independent judiciary in the same category as dictators and authoritarians who kill with impunity”, it argues.

This argument misrepresents the law of the ICC and conceals substantive facts.

Even if Israel and its institutions could be deemed “democratic” and “independent”, international law requires a lot more than that. The principle of complementarity means that the ICC complements, rather than replaces, national jurisdictions. Thus, the ICC prosecutor may intervene only when the state that has jurisdiction is “inactive” in investigating the crimes.

Complementarity in no way means that the elected officials and independent judiciary of a democratic state shall enjoy immunity from ICC prosecution. Instead, it means that Israel needs to show it has active investigations. The fact of Israel’s inactivity in relation to war crimes and crimes against humanity by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defence Minister Yoav Gallant in and of itself already means that the complementarity assessment has been exhausted and the court may proceed.

And even if it were active, Israel would need to demonstrate the willingness and ability to genuinely prosecute the perpetrator and conduct. The law of the ICC allows it to intervene if the “investigative activities undertaken by the domestic authorities are not tangible, concrete and progressive”, as laid out in a decision in the case of

Ivory Coast first lady Simone Gbagbo, accused of crimes against humanity.

Proceedings designated to shield the perpetrators or crimes in question warrant an ICC intervention. This, for instance, requires Israel to investigate the same person for substantially the same conduct.

The Post conceals that for decades, Israel has failed to hold to account its officials and members of its armed forces for crimes. These failures have been repeatedly documented by the UN and human rights organisations.

The 2014 UN Commission of Inquiry, for example, addressed the “procedural, structural and substantive shortcomings, which continue to compromise Israel’s ability to adequately fulfil its duty to uphold international law.

These reports are in no way unknown or recent. Human Rights Watch, for example, has documented Israel’s failure to prosecute war crimes as far back as the 2014 war on Gaza, the second Intifada, the first Intifada and even the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, after which the Israeli government created the Kahan Commission to cover up then-Defence Minister Ariel Sharon’s responsibility for the Sabra and Shatila massacre.

The Post’s omission of these facts does not seem to be mere negligence.

The editorial also claims that the arrest warrants “undermine the ICC’s credibility and give credence to accusations of hypocrisy and selective prosecution”. This maliciously misrepresents the facts to intentionally deceive the readers.

There are indeed longstanding, well substantiated and almost undisputed

accusations but not of a bias against countries like Israel. During the first 20 years of its operation, the court sought to prosecute people solely from the African continent. As a result, it was criticised for having an “Africa problem” and channelling the “assertion of neocolonial domination”.

The ICC’s negligence regarding Western armies’ atrocities was consistently brought up, especially in relation to Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan. As Valentina Azarova and Triestino Mariniello and I have previously argued in two articles, the court’s action on crimes committed against Palestinians could help it redress its problems with effectiveness and legitimacy.

As a legal scholar, I have not come across any rigorously justified accusation against the court that it is biased against “elected leaders” of “democratic states”, as the Post suggests. US attacks on the ICC – starting with the 2002 Hague Invasion Act, which threatens US invasion of any state complying with an ICC arrest warrant for US citizens – have been crude expressions of US hegemony and unpolished thuggery.

Israel itself has engaged in similar activities, as an investigation by +972 Magazine, the Local Call and The Guardian revealed in May. According to these publications, Israel ran a nine-year, state-orchestrated espionage and intimidation campaign against the ICC to shield its nationals from prosecution.

In the end, even in its decision to proceed with prosecution in the Palestine file, the ICC is doing the bare minimum of what it should be. And it is not its “bias” – as The Washington Post argues – that compels it to act, but rather the Israeli conduct – its magnitude, degree of cruelty and unprecedented availability of conclusive evidence.

— Aljazeera

# Macron’s Paris invite shows power fast flowing from Biden to Trump

Stephen Collinson

THERE’LL be a strong sense of déjà vu when French President Emmanuel Macron lays the flattery on thick for Donald Trump in Paris this week-end.

Few foreign leaders did more to woo Trump when he was the 45th president. In fact, Macron treated him with such deference at a Bastille Day parade on the Champs-Élysées that Trump came home wanting a military parade of his own — on July Fourth.

As Trump prepares to become the 47th president, Macron has surpassed himself, inviting Trump to attend the year’s most vaunted opening — the unveiling of the newly restored Notre Dame Cathedral five years after a savage fire.

Putting Trump at the center of the star-studded VIP event, which will mark his big return to the global stage, says everything about the power fast flowing back to the president-elect six weeks before he begins his second term.

Dame has been restored to its full level of glory, and even more so. It will be a very special day for all!” Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform.

The trip promises all that the president-elect most appreciates. A chance to seize the spotlight; the adulation of being an honored guest; and the fanfare of being part of a unique spectacle likely to attract millions of eyeballs across the globe.

It’s also the kind of eye-catching gambit for which Macron is known — but that sometimes comes unstuck. The French president’s impulsive gesture earlier this year, for example, to call snap parliamentary elections backfired spectacularly and plunged the country into a governing crisis.

Macron’s invitation is the latest move in the never-ending tussle among European powers to be Washington’s top conduit on the other side of the Atlantic. Macron has long

Macron’s legacy might end up mirroring Biden’s — as a president forced to hand over power to nationalist, populist forces he defined his administration as fighting against. Far-right leader Marine Le Pen, whose anti-immigrant ideology is similar to Trump’s, may have her best shot yet at making it through France’s two-stage presidential election system to win power in 2027.

Macron’s daring new overture to Trump is likely to trigger an outpouring of mutual praise. But if history is anything to go by, it won’t last.

The first time around, the Macrons and the Trumps dined at the Michelin-starred Jules Verne restaurant at the Eiffel Tower, whispered to one-another at the Bastille Day parade, then kissed and held hands at the White House. In the Oval Office in April 2018, Trump said, “We have to make him perfect, he is perfect,” as he brushed what he said was dandruff off the French president’s shoulder.

**Trump isn’t waiting until January to launch his new foreign policy — he’s already threatened a trade war with Canada and Mexico and showed who is boss when Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau rushed to Florida to appease him last week. And on Monday, he warned that there will be “ALL HELL TO PAY” in the Middle East if Hamas doesn’t release hostages in Gaza before Inauguration Day. Trump’s starring role in Paris will also mark a poignant contrast with Joe Biden’s increasingly ignominious long goodbye. The president came under fierce criticism Monday, even from within his own party, after he pardoned his son Hunter, undercutting a core principle of his term — that everyone is equal before the law. “He didn’t need to tell the American public, ‘I will not do this’ and he did ... and when you made a promise, you gotta keep it,” Virginia Democratic Sen. Tim Kaine told CNN’s Manu Raju. Utah Republican Sen. Mitt Romney added: “It was a terrible decision and it just made me heart sick.”**

Trump isn’t waiting until January to launch his new foreign policy — he’s already threatened a trade war with Canada and Mexico and showed who is boss when Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau rushed to Florida to appease him last week. And on Monday, he warned that there will be “ALL HELL TO PAY” in the Middle East if Hamas doesn’t release hostages in Gaza before Inauguration Day.

Trump’s starring role in Paris will also mark a poignant contrast with Joe Biden’s increasingly ignominious long goodbye. The president came under fierce criticism Monday, even from within his own party, after he pardoned his son Hunter, undercutting a core principle of his term — that everyone is equal before the law.

“He didn’t need to tell the American public, ‘I will not do this’ and he did ... and when you made a promise, you gotta keep it,” Virginia Democratic Sen. Tim Kaine told CNN’s Manu Raju. Utah Republican Sen. Mitt Romney added: “It was a terrible decision and it just made me heart sick.”

The announcement of Trump’s trip to Paris came as Biden landed in Angola for an official presidential visit that is sure to include far more substance than Trump’s journey. The president seeks to highlight US commitment to sub-Saharan Africa in the face of China’s investment-led regional power play. Trump never made it to Africa as president and seemed more interested in insulting the continent than helping it. Biden’s visit will also showcase one of the most successful US global policies in decades — the massive program fighting HIV/AIDS in Africa that faces an uncertain future when Trump returns to the White House.

But the president-elect’s far more visible jaunt to the City of Light will stress how he is again the American that foreign leaders want to court as Biden increasingly fades from the international scene.

Perhaps most significantly, Trump’s trip will highlight the dilemma with which every world leader is wrestling: how to deal with a new American president who is certain to be more aggressive and capricious on the world stage than he was even in his first turbulent term — and who often prefers the company of tyrants over allies.

The president-elect is reveling in his return to the international spotlight after news broke of Macron’s invitation Monday. “President Emmanuel Macron has done a wonderful job ensuring that Notre

sought to position France as the dominant European power — especially since the retirement of former German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who was promoting her memoirs in Washington on Monday night alongside former President Barack Obama, who in 2016 urged her to save the West from Trump.

Trump’s second coming has sparked a similar sense of crisis among Western powers, who are worried that he will desert Ukraine in order to please his friend, Russian President Vladimir Putin, amid rising expectations that the president-elect will threaten massive tariffs against the European Union. There’s also concern that Trump will fracture NATO in his second term, after he said on the campaign trail that he’d tell Russia it could do “whatever the hell they want” to alliance members that don’t meet guidelines for minimum defense spending.

Macron, by deploying the power of symbolism and pulling off the coup of a first foreign visit even before Trump retakes office, seems to have a head start on his rivals. There’s little competition from Germany, where Chancellor Olaf Scholz seems destined to soon follow Biden into the political wilderness after the collapse of his governing coalition with an election set for February. New British Prime Minister Keir Starmer is stronger but has a balancing act as Trump is deeply unpopular in his ruling Labour Party. And Britain lacks European clout after it left the EU in a populist outburst that delighted Trump and fore-shadowed his 2016 victory.

In a major foreign policy speech on Monday night, Starmer rejected the idea that the United Kingdom must pick between its friendships with the United States and Europe — a choice some observers fear Trump might force it to make. He also recalled his meeting with Trump in September, weeks before the US election. “When President Trump graciously hosted me for dinner in Trump Tower, I told him that we will invest more deeply than ever in this transatlantic bond with our American friends in the years to come,” Starmer said.

Macron, hugely unpopular deep into his second term, is not the force he once was either. His invitation to Trump is rich in irony since the far-right Trump-friendly National Rally Party is threatening to topple Prime Minister Michel Barnier in a move that would further weaken the president and cause even more disarray. There are growing signs that

“Emmanuel will go down as one of your great presidents,” Trump told the French people.

The bromance didn’t last, however, as Trump’s hostility to Europe got in the way. Things really went off the rails during a visit by the US leader to France later in 2018. Trump reacted poorly to Macron’s push for a European army — ironically, a partial response to the US leader’s frequent complaints about the need for American taxpayers to bankroll the continent’s defense. Trump called the idea “very insulting,” later mocked

Macron’s “very low approval rating in France, 26%” and tweeted support for his nationalist foes.

While Trump seems prepared to give it another shot, Macron — who, like Biden, styles himself as a protector of democracy and a bulwark against far-right nationalism — is far from the president-elect’s favorite European leader. That honor belongs to Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, a frequent guest at Mar-a-Lago, whose blueprint for eroding democracy, curtailing press freedom and politicizing justice is far more to Trump’s taste. “Some people don’t like him because he’s too strong,” Trump said during a rally in New Hampshire during his primary campaign in January. “It’s good to have a strong man at the head of a country.”

Still, both Macron and Trump place great importance on relationships between foreign leaders — so perhaps they can rekindle the spark where it all began.

Trump will arrive in Paris shortly after selecting Charles Kushner, the father-in-law of his daughter Ivanka as the next US ambassador to France. On the one hand, this pick might be seen by some as an insult to America’s longest diplomatic friendship since Kushner was convicted of tax evasion and witness retaliation charges and was pardoned by Trump. But the French long ago perfected the art of diplomatic discretion, and in some ways, Kushner’s selection might be seen as a compliment — he is, after all, family for Trump — and therefore has his ear.

Kushner’s appointment may also offer the chance of a reentry to high society, on the world’s most glittering diplomatic circuit, for Ivanka Trump and her husband Jared Kushner, who now live in Florida, far from their former haunts in Manhattan where the name Trump became anathema to elite liberal chattering classes.

— CNN

# This year, Arab-American political power came to the fore

One of the major political developments in the United States that has gotten little attention in the wake of the Democrats’ astounding loss in the November 5 elections is the success of Arab American political organising.

A new generation of political activists has emerged that has earned representation in unprecedented numbers and impact for the 3.5-million-strong Arab-American community in elected and appointed political offices. It also put Arab Americans on the electoral map for the first time by launching the Uncommitted movement during the Democratic primaries and making a foreign policy issue – Israel’s genocide in Gaza – a national moral issue.

The Democratic Party underestimated the power of this new generation and the intensity of citizen anger, which cost it dearly in the election.

What happened in the Arab American community is a vintage all-American tale. They, like other communities, started their pursuit of political impact as a low-profile immigrant group who became dynamic citizens after political developments threatened their wellbeing and motivated them to take action.

Arab American mobilisation traces its beginnings to small-scale participation in Jesse Jackson’s 1984 and 1988 presidential campaigns for the Democratic Party. Jackson was the first serious presidential candidate to include Arab Americans as Democratic Party convention delegates, part of his Rainbow Coalition of “the white, the Hispanic, the Black, the Arab, the Jew, the woman, the Native American, the small farmer, the businessperson, the environmentalist, the peace activist, the young, the old, the lesbian, the gay, and the disabled [who] make up the American quilt”.

His campaign gave momentum to voter registration drives within the Arab

American community, which continued in the following three decades. By 2020, nearly 90 percent of Arab Americans were registered to vote. By 2024, the Arab American voter block – in its expansive coalition with other groups – had grown large enough to impact outcomes in critical swing states, especially Michigan and Pennsylvania.

The attacks of 9/11 and

**What happened in the Arab American community is a vintage all-American tale. They, like other communities, started their pursuit of political impact as a low-profile immigrant group who became dynamic citizens after political developments threatened their wellbeing and motivated them to take action. Arab American mobilisation traces its beginnings to small-scale participation in Jesse Jackson’s 1984 and 1988 presidential campaigns for the Democratic Party. Jackson was the first serious presidential candidate to include Arab Americans as Democratic Party convention delegates, part of his Rainbow Coalition of “the white, the Hispanic, the Black, the Arab, the Jew, the woman, the Native American, the small farmer, the businessperson, the environmentalist, the peace activist, the young, the old, the lesbian, the gay, and the disabled [who] make up the American quilt”. His campaign gave momentum to voter registration drives within the Arab American community, which continued in the following three decades. By 2020, nearly 90 percent of Arab Americans were registered to vote. By 2024, the Arab American voter block – in its expansive coalition with other groups – had grown large enough to impact outcomes in critical swing states, especially Michigan and Pennsylvania. The attacks of 9/11 and the subsequent backlash motivated Arab Americans even more to engage in meaningful politics.**

the subsequent backlash motivated Arab Americans even more to engage in meaningful politics. Many members of the community refused to live in fear, trying to avoid the intimidation and smears that had long kept their parents and grandparents subdued and quiescent politically. As Omar Kurdi, founder of Arab Americans of Cleveland, told me, “We were no longer silent because we saw the dangers to us of being quiet and politically inactive. We refused to live in fear of politics. Since then, we have been proud, confident, and active in public. We no longer accept crumbs, but want our share of the pie, and we understand now how we can work for that.”

As a result, over the past two decades, Arab Americans have entered the public sphere and politics at all levels: from local, city, and county positions to state

## Rami G Khouri

and federal ones. Elected officials say they succeeded because their constituents knew and trusted them. Candidates who won state and national congressional seats – like Rashida Tlaib in Michigan – inspired hundreds of younger Arab Americans to enter the political fray. Successful experiences in city politics educated

newcomers on how they could impact decision-making, improve their own lives, and serve the entire community. They mastered locally the basics of politics, one Ohio activist told me, “like lobbying, bringing pressure, protesting, educating the public, achieving consensus, and creating coalitions based on shared values, problems, and goals”. All of this momentum, built up over the years, coalesced into the Uncommitted movement in 2024. As the Biden administration unconditionally supported Israel to carry out genocidal violence in Palestine and Lebanon, Arab-American activists moved to use their newfound leverage as voters in electoral politics.

They joined like-minded social justice activists from other groups that mainstream political parties had long taken for granted – including Muslim

Americans, Blacks, Hispanics, youth, progressive Jews, churches, and unions – and sent a strong message during the primaries that they would not support Biden’s re-election bid unless he changed his position on Gaza.

The campaign hoped that tens of thousands of voters in the primaries would send the Democrats a big message by voting “uncommitted” years. The Uncommitted movement’s precise contribution to the Democratic Party’s defeat is hotly debated right now. One activist told me the movement “placed Arab Americans at the centre of Democratic Party politics, led the progressives, helped Harris lose in swing states, and nationally brought attention to Gaza, divestment, and moral issues in ways we had never been able to do previously.”

All this occurs in uncharted territory, with no clarity if Arab Americans can influence both the Democratic and Republican parties who might now compete for their vote. One Arab-American activist in his 30s added, “We are liberated from the Democrats who took us for granted, and we Arab Americans are now a swing vote officially.”

Other activists I spoke to thought the election experience could set the stage for a larger movement to counter the pro-Israel lobby AIPAC, though that would require conquering the next hurdle of establishing Political Action Committees (PACs) and raising substantial funds.

That is a future possibility. For now, it is important to recognise that a national-level Arab-American political effort has been born from the fires and devastation of the US-Israeli genocide in Palestine and Lebanon. Whether it can improve the wellbeing of Arab Americans and all Americans will be revealed in the years ahead.





KARACHI: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal addressing at 4th World Islamic Finance Forum.

## Ahsan Iqbal highlights Islamic finance's role in sustainable development

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Institute of Business Administration (IBA) Karachi hosted the 4th World Islamic Finance Forum (WIFF) at Mövenpick Hotel, Karachi, under the theme "Islamic Finance: Innovation, Climate Finance & Sustainable Growth." The event brought together prominent policymakers, industry leaders, and academicians to discuss the critical role of Islamic finance in shaping a sustainable and ethical global economy.

Key attendees included Dr. Akbar Zaidi, Executive Director of IBA Karachi; Irfan Siddiqui, CEO of Meezan Bank; Akif Saeed, Chairman SECP; Saim Ullah, Deputy Governor, State Bank of Pakistan; and Federal Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal, as the special guest of the event.

The forum marked a significant milestone with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Dr. Akbar Zaidi and Irfan Siddiqui, CEO of Meezan Bank, to foster collaboration in research, training, and capacity-building for advancing Islamic finance.

Saim Ullah, Deputy Governor SBP, discussed the central bank's initiatives to expand Islamic finance. "Islamic finance provides a disciplined framework by identifying and eliminating irresponsible financial practices," he stated. He highlighted that SBP's Standing Committee on Transformation is advancing compliance and has requested transformation plans from private banks. "Transitioning public debt into Shariah-compliant instruments remains a significant challenge," he added.

Akif Saeed, Chairman SECP, called for innovation in Islamic finance. "The integration of fintech with Islamic finance principles offers unparalleled oppor-

tunities for expanding financial inclusion and addressing global sustainability challenges," he remarked.

Federal Minister Ahsan Iqbal addressed the forum, emphasizing Pakistan's commitment to climate action and sustainable growth. "For Pakistan, climate action is not a choice but an imperative. Ranked among the top 10 nations most vulnerable to climate change, the devastating floods of 2022 caused economic losses exceeding \$30 billion," he stated.

The Minister outlined key governmental initiatives:

Issuance of Pakistan's First Green Sukuk worth \$500 million, funding renewable energy projects and reducing reliance on fossil fuels.

Targeting a 60% renewable energy share by 2030, aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

He further emphasized the critical role of economic stability, policy consistency, and continuous reforms are the four pillars of a successful nation," he said. Highlighting Pakistan's

economic recovery, he noted the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) surpassing the 100,000 milestone, a testament to investor confidence. He added, "Certain elements in the country don't want economic and political stability, and as soon as PSX crossed the milestone, they marched towards Islamabad to cause instability and chaos. This resulted in a hit on PSX as it fell by 3,500 points."

He further stated, "We are grateful that the public supported us in 2022 when we had to take tough measures to meet IMF conditions which the previous government didn't fulfill. Now, the people of Pakistan are happy as we have avoided calls of bankruptcy and have saved ourselves from becoming an example like Sri Lanka."

Citing Allama Iqbal, he added, "When Allama Iqbal wrote 17 letters to Muhammad Ali Jinnah, he emphasized that without freedom, the Muslims of the subcontinent could not achieve economic stability and financial autonomy." Reflecting on global challenges, the Federal Minister remarked, "Why do we feel

helpless in stopping the bloodshed caused by Israel's atrocities? Israel is economically stronger than 52 Muslim nations combined and is killing thousands of innocent lives with impunity.

Economic strength is a key to ensuring political influence and safeguarding human rights."

Concluding his address, the Federal Minister posed a critical question: "What are we leaving for the upcoming generation? We must focus on policy consistency, as envisioned in Vision 2023, until sudden disruptions and political turmoil changed the trajectory."

Dr. Akbar Zaidi, Executive Director of IBA Karachi, concluded the forum by reiterating its importance. "WIFF serves as a vital platform to demonstrate how Islamic finance can bridge ethical principles with innovative solutions, paving the way for sustainable development globally," he said.

The forum spotlighted Green Sukuk, Islamic fintech, and regulatory reforms as transformative tools for driving sustainable growth and addressing pressing global challenges.



PESHAWAR: President SCCI Fazal Moqeem Khan taking oath from chairman Gul Nawaz Khan Afridi and General Secretary Bizar ur Rehman of newly elected cabinet of Petroleum Dealer & Carriage Association. — F.P. photo

## Pakistani rupee gains 11 paise against US dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani rupee on Tuesday appreciated by 11 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 277.86 against the previous day's closing of Rs 277.97.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 277.40 and Rs 278.90 respectively.

The price of Euro

decreased by 2 paise to close at Rs 291.97 against the last day's closing of Rs 291.99, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs 1.85, whereas a decrease of 51 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs 352.19 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs 352.70.

The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham and

the Saudi Riyal decreased by 04 paise each to close at Rs75.64 and Rs73.95 respectively.

**Gold prices increase by Rs700 per tola**

The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs 700 and was sold at Rs 275,200 on Tuesday against its sale at Rs 274,500, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also went

up by Rs 600 to Rs 235,940 from Rs 235,340 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat gold increased to Rs 216,278 from Rs 215,728.

The price of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs 3,400 and Rs 2,914.95, respectively.

The price of gold in the international market rose by \$7 to \$2,640 from \$2,633, the Association reported.

## Exports increase by 12.57% to \$13.691b during Jul-Nov 2024

ISLAMABAD (APP): The exports from the country increased by 12.57 percent during the first five months of the current fiscal year as compared to the corresponding months of last year, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

Exports during July-November (2024-25) were recorded at \$13.691 billion against \$12.162 billion during July-November

(2023-24), according to PBS data.

On the other hand, imports into the country also went up by 3.90 percent by growing from \$21.503 million last year to \$22.342 million during the first five months of the current year.

Based on the figures, the trade deficit during the months under review was recorded at \$8.651 billion

against the deficit of \$9.341 billion last year, showing a decrease of 7.39 percent.

Meanwhile, on year-on-year basis, the exports in November 2024 increased by 8.98 percent to \$2.804 billion from \$2.573 billion in November 2023.

On the other hand, the imports however decreased by 2.92 percent by going down from \$4.525 to

\$4.393 percent, according to PBS data.

On a month-on-month basis, the exports from the country dipped by 5.97 percent when compared to the exports of \$2.982 billion during October 2024.

The imports also witnessed decrease of 3.83 percent when compared to the imports of \$4.568 billion in October 2024, PBS reported.

## SCCI rejects move to fix MRP of tea

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry and tea importers rejected the Federal Board of Revenue decision to fix the minimum retail price (MRP) of tea at Rs1,200 per kg for levying sales tax that would make the commodity more expensive and demanded withdrawal of it immediately.

In a joint statement he issued on Tuesday, SCCI president Fazal Moqeem Khan, member of Pakistan Tea Association central executive body and the chamber executive committee Ashfaq Ahmad and importers attached with tea sector and others, said the imposition of tax would further increase price of tea and become unaffordable for the inflation-stricken people.

They said importers have inflicted huge financial losses on the head of demurrage and rent of con-

tainers on a daily basis.

Tea importers explained the MRP at the import stage would have an adverse impact of Rs150-300 per kg on imported tea prices, which would become negative impacts on tea business and prices will also exorbitantly increase.

Tea importers said before fixing the MRP for sales tax purposes, it is crucial to consider that the definition of "manufacturer" in Section 2(16) of the Sales Tax Act 1990, includes activities such as blending, mixing, processing, and packaging, as clarified in Circular No. 3(11) ST-L&P/2013-94433-R dated July 17, 2019. Based on this, tea imported for these processes qualifies as "raw material".

Accordingly, sales tax should be based on the import value, as per Subsection 46(f) of Section 2 of the Sales Tax Act, 1990, rather than the minimum retail price, Ashfaq

said.

SCCI chief said that MRP cannot be applied at the import stage as the tea has to follow various value-addition procedures before it is made shelf-ready.

"This MRP disrupts the supply chain and eradicates the role of wholesalers and distributors who play a vital role in the business, while MRP at the import stage also eradicates the basic right of commercial imports," the PTA executive member said.

Ashfaq Ahmad said tea is a part of our daily diet, a staple food item, not a drink.

Most people in rural and urban areas consume tea as per their earnings, he added.

PTA executive council member feared further fixing of MRP will incentivise unscrupulous elements to exploit the situation, and thus, import of low-priced teas will find its way through illegal channels.

## Google strengthens pledge to digital economy



### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Kyle Gardner, Google's Government Affairs and Public Policy Lead for South Asia, met with Fahd Haroon, Minister of State/Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Digital Media, at his office to discuss ongoing and future efforts to support Pakistan's digital economy and address key challenges related to online safety and cybersecurity.

During the meeting, Gardner outlined Google's continued investment in Pakistan's digital ecosys-

tem, emphasizing the company's commitment to fostering economic growth, security, and innovation. The discussion highlighted the importance of collaboration between the public and private sectors to address pressing issues such as online safety, digital literacy, and the protection of cultural values in the rapidly evolving digital landscape.

Among other topics of interest, the conversation also covered challenges related to cybersecurity, including the protection of users from cyber threats, as well as ongoing efforts to

ensure that online platforms support a safe, secure, and respectful digital environment.

Both parties expressed their shared commitment to initiatives aimed at enhancing digital literacy, increasing access to information and promoting the responsible use of technology in Pakistan. As part of its broader global efforts to empower individuals and communities, Google remains dedicated to supporting Pakistan's digital transformation, contributing to economic prosperity, and ensuring the safety of users online.

## Ahsan Iqbal congratulates PSX for stellar 60% growth in 2024

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) held a Gong Ceremony to formally welcome Ahsan Iqbal, Federal Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives - Government of Pakistan.

The gong was struck by the Federal Minister to open the trading day amidst the presence of Chairperson PSX, Dr. Shamshad Akhtar; MD & CEO PSX, Mr. Farrukh H. Sabzwari, PSX Board Members, PSX Management, Senior Bankers, members of capital market fraternity, key stakeholders and distinguished guests.

Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, Chairperson Pakistan Stock Exchange welcoming the distinguished guests said,

"Ahsan Iqbal has been a voice for developing countries at the United Nations," praised the federal minister's contributions to global and national economic progress. She noted that in Pakistan Stock Exchange remains one of the best-performing markets in the region and the world, driven by strong economic indicators and policies.

Dr Akhtar emphasized the role of the government in fostering market growth through targeted programs. "Crossing 100,000 points last week has brought renewed enthusiasm to the market," she said, adding that the PSX's ability to finance long-term developmental projects makes it a critical asset for Pakistan's economic future. Reflecting on the market's perform-

ance, Dr Akhtar pointed out that the PSX has delivered a 7% return in dollar terms over the past five years. She also underscored the importance of partnerships with the Chinese consortium in supporting the exchange's growth journey, asserting that crossing the 100,000-point milestone in the KSE-100 Index highlights Pakistan's potential to the world.

Ahsan Iqbal as the Chief Guest at the ceremony, acknowledged the significant role of the capital market in Pakistan's economic growth. Ahsan Iqbal addressed the gathering, congratulating the Board & Management of PSX on behalf of Prime Minister of Pakistan Mr. Shahbaz Sharif and shared his thoughts on the achievement: "Crossing the

100,000 mark in the 100-Index showcases Pakistan's potential to the world. The federal government remains committed to supporting initiatives that strengthen the capital market and contributes to sustainable economic development."

Addressing the nation's recent challenges, Mr. Ahsan Iqbal said, "In April 2022, when we took charge, Pakistan was on the verge of default. The choice was to save politics or the state." He credited the government's tough decisions, such as increasing energy prices and delaying elections, for stabilizing the economy. "Inflation has dropped from 38% to below 5% in two years, and the stock market has soared from 30,000 to 100,000 points," he noted, high-

lighting the PSX as one of the most successful markets globally."

Speaking at the occasion, MD/CEO PSX, Mr. Farrukh H Sabzwari, stated, "It is an honor to welcome Mr. Ahsan Iqbal (Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives) to the Pakistan Stock Exchange as we celebrate this achievement. KSE-100 Index surpassing 100,000 points underscores the collective efforts of market participants & stakeholders, reflecting the trust of investors in Pakistan's economy. For the management of PSX, this is a time for serious reflection. We need to move expeditiously on increasing investor numbers, listing more companies and ensuring we make Pakistan Stock



Exchange a true representative of GDP."

Prominent representatives from brokerage hous-

es, asset management companies and senior bankers attended the Gong Ceremony. The event was

also an opportunity to recognize all stakeholders' efforts in achieving this important milestone.





## In brief

## Man Utd not out of title race

LONDON (AFP): Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta says it is too early to rule Manchester United out of the Premier League title race as he prepares his in-form team to face Ruben Amorim's resurgent side on Wednesday. United are 15 points behind leaders Liverpool and four points off the Champions League spots after 13 matches. Arteta was asked at his pre-match press conference on Tuesday whether United could be in the title mix despite their poor start to the season under the sacked Erik ten Hag. "It's still very early in the season," said the Spaniard, whose team are second in the table, six points clear of United. "Any team that has the capacity to put five or six wins in a row is going to be up there because it's so tough and you see every week how all the teams are struggling to maintain winning, winning and winning. So I think anything is possible." And Arteta said champions Manchester City were still a danger despite their recent slump -- Pep Guardiola's men have lost their past four league matches to fall 11 points behind Liverpool. "Again, if there is a team with the capacity to turn it around and start to win, win, win and win -- don't rule them out because you know how much quality they have," he said. Arsenal have a good recent home record against United, who have won two and drawn one of their first three games in all competitions under Amorim. Arteta said he could already see the influence of the former Sporting Lisbon boss, just weeks after he replaced Ten Hag.

## Man City can hit top form again

LONDON (AFP): Pep Guardiola says struggling Manchester City can hit the heights of recent seasons once he has all his top players back despite their alarming slump. The defending Premier League champions have lost six of their past seven games in all competitions -- falling 11 points behind leaders Liverpool in the English top flight. It is an extraordinary collapse for a team that have won six of the past seven Premier League titles, including the past four. Guardiola, whose team host Nottingham Forest on Wednesday, told a pre-match press conference he was confident City's decline is not terminal. "With all the squad this season, we'll be close to the level that we reached last season," he said on Tuesday. The club have been beset by injury problems this season, most notably the loss of Ballon d'Or winner Rodri for the rest of the campaign. A number of other key players have spent time in the treatment room including Kyle Walker, Jack Grealish, Kevin De Bruyne, Mateo Kovacic and Ruben Dias. Guardiola described City as "magnificent" at Liverpool on Sunday despite their 2-0 defeat. "I would say we are not far away from the team second in the Premier League (City are two points behind Arsenal)," he said. "But always it's the way you play, the consistency you have in the boxes, and many things that give you the positive thoughts of what is going to happen in future." Guardiola said the club would talk "internally" over whether they would bolster the squad in next month's transfer window. And he confirmed that Ederson remained his number one goalkeeper after he was dropped for the Liverpool match in favour of understudy Stefan Ortega following a mistake in last week's 3-3 draw against Feyenoord.



MULTAN: Pakistan Blind Cricket Team poses for a group photo with a trophy after their victory against the Bangladesh team during the 4th Blind T20 cricket World Cup 2024 played at Multan Cricket Stadium.

## Bradman 'baggy green' cap sells for \$250,000 at auction



SYDNEY (AFP): A "baggy green" Test cap worn by Australian great Don Bradman sold for \$250,000 at auction on Tuesday as collectors vied to own a rare piece of cricketing history. The tattered garment -- almost 80 years old -- was sun-faded, showed signs of "insect damage" and had a torn peak.

Auction house Bonhams said Bradman wore the cap during India's 1947-48 tour of Australia, his last Test series on home soil.

In an auction lasting 10 minutes, a flurry of bidding pushed the price from a starting point of \$160,000 to a winning offer of \$250,000 (Aus\$390,000).

The total cost was \$310,000 once "buyer's premium" fees were tacked on.

Bonhams said it was "the only known baggy green" worn by Bradman during the series, in which he scored 715 runs in six innings at an average of 178.75, with three centuries and a double-hundred.

Australia's cricketers are awarded the dark green woollen caps before Test debuts and they are revered by players and fans alike, often the more battered the better.

A different "baggy green" worn by Bradman during his Test debut in 1928 fetched \$290,000 when it went under the hammer in 2020.

That was far less than the \$650,000 paid for Shane Warne's baggy green when he put it up for sale to help Australian bushfire victims earlier that year.

Bradman retired with an all-time-high Test batting average of 99.94 and has been described by cricket authority Wisden as the greatest to "have ever graced the gentleman's game".

He died in 2001 aged 92.



ADELAIDE: Steve Smith of Australia and Pat Cummins of Australia during an Australian Test Squad training session.

## Muqeeem stars as Pakistan crush Zimbabwe to win T20 series

BULAWAYO (AFP): Pakistan wrist spinner Sufiyan Muqeeem starred in a series-clinching 10-wicket Twenty20 international rout of Zimbabwe in Bulawayo on Tuesday.

The 25-year-old took five consecutive wickets for the loss of only three runs as Zimbabwe crumbled to 57 all out in 12.4 overs after making a promising start.

Pakistan then sped to 61-0 off 33 balls through Saim Ayub (36) and Omair Yousuf (22) to follow up a 57-run victory last Sunday in the first of three matches.

Victory completed a white-ball double for the tourists, who won a one-day international series 2-1 last week.

Pakistan captain Salman Agha said: "Losing the toss did not concern us

because we had plans and executed them really well. The bowling of Sufiyan was outstanding.

"We have a young side full of quality players and the way they are performing is very heartening for me."

Zimbabwe skipper Sikandar Raza admitted his team were "all hurting and in a pretty bad place at the moment."

"My biggest concern is whether we are learning our lessons when we suffer defeats because we seem to be making the same mistakes match after match."

Zimbabwe openers Brian Bennett (21) and Tadiwanashe Marumani (16) -- the only batters to reach double figures -- built a 37-run partnership in four overs.

Then, both fell within five balls, and the home

team lost their 10 wickets for just 20 runs as Muqeeem wreaked havoc.

Marumani was caught by Tayyab Tahir at cover point and Bennett by Irfan Khan at deep square leg at the Queens Sports Club.

All-rounder Raza, often the batting savior for Zimbabwe, made just three before his off stump was uprooted by Abbas Afridi.

Raza was among four bowlers who had no success trying to contain Ayub and Yousuf. The openers struck 10 boundaries, including a six each, between them. A four from Ayub past backward point sealed victory. Pakistan complete the T20 series against Zimbabwe on Thursday. They then travel to South Africa for an eight-match all-formats tour, including two Tests.

## India likely to reject PCB's hybrid model for future matches

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): The ongoing tussle between the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) and the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has taken a new turn, with a fresh impasse emerging despite PCB's alleged acceptance of the hybrid model for the ICC Champions Trophy 2025.

Indian media reports claim that the PCB is now demanding that the same hybrid model be applied to ICC tournaments hosted by India in the future, a proposal the BCCI has outrightly rejected. The BCCI is reportedly planning to argue that there are no security concerns in India that warrant such an arrangement.

Prior to the ICC board meeting last Friday, the PCB was steadfast in its opposition to a hybrid model for the Champions Trophy, which would involve India's matches being played at a neutral venue. However, with the BCCI remaining firm in its stance and the ICC hinting at the possibility of relocating the Champions Trophy entirely from Pakistan, the Indian media claims the PCB had limited options and ultimately agreed to the hybrid model.

The decisions regarding the Champions Trophy would inevitably impact future ICC tournaments hosted by both India and Pakistan. Given India's refusal to travel to Pakistan, the PCB is advocating for a similar arrangement for Pakistan's participation in Indian-hosted events.

The PCB has reportedly requested the ICC to schedule Pakistan's women's matches at a neutral venue during next year's 50-over World Cup in India. Additionally, for the upcoming men's ICC events -- including the T20 World Cup, Champions Trophy, and 50-over World Cup -- the PCB is pushing for a hybrid model to ensure their team doesn't have to travel to India.

However, the BCCI is unlikely to agree to these demands, citing that security concerns in India are unfounded. The BCCI has consistently maintained that security risks are the primary reason for not sending Indian teams to Pakistan. This position was reinforced last month when the Indian government denied clearance for the blind cricket team to travel to Pakistan for the T20 World Cup, citing security issues. As a result, the BCCI sees no justification for adopting a hybrid model for events hosted in India.

## Pakistan wins 4th T20 Blind Cricket World Cup

MULTAN (APP): Pakistan's blind cricket team made history by claiming its maiden T20 Blind Cricket World Cup title, defeating Bangladesh by 10 wickets in a one-sided final at Multan Cricket Stadium.

The victory also marked Pakistan's unbeaten run throughout the tournament, solidifying its dominance on the global stage. Opting to bat first after winning the toss, Bangladesh managed to post 139 runs for the loss of seven wickets in the 20 overs. Arif Hussain stood out for Bangladesh, scoring 54 runs off 52 balls, while Muhammad Salman contributed 31 off 35 balls.

Pakistan's Babar Ali delivered an impressive bowling spell, taking two wickets for 24 runs in four overs.

Chasing 140, Pakistan's openers put on a masterclass in batting. Skipper Nisar Ali led from the front, smashing an unbeaten 72 runs, while Muhammad Safdar supported him with an undefeated 47. The pair reached the target in just 10.2 overs, sealing a resounding victory for Pakistan.

During the prize distribution ceremony, World Blind Cricket Council (WBCC) President Syed Sultan Shah, alongside WBCC Global Development Director Raymond Moxley, handed

over the championship trophy and a cash prize of Rs one million to Nisar Ali. Bangladesh's captain, Arif Ullah, received the runners-up trophy along with a cash prize of Rs 500,000.

Nisar Ali was named Player of the Match for his exceptional performance in the final. Bangladesh's Arif Hussain was recognized as the Emerging Player of the tournament. The best players in the B1, B2, and B3 categories were also awarded, with Bangladesh's Azmat Hussain, Pakistan's Naimatullah, and Sri Lanka's Dimuth Sandaruwan earning the honors, respectively.



BULAWAYO: Sufiyan Muqeeem walks back after his T20I best figures of 5 for 3.

## Pakistan reach Jr Asia Cup of Hockey final

MUSCAT (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan on Tuesday reached final the Junior Asia Cup of Hockey after defeating Japan 4-2 in Oman.

Hanan Shahid named player of the match as he posted two goals while Sufyan Khan and Basharat Ali scored one goal each, helping their side to book place in the final round. Japan suffered elimination from the event as he could post two goals in the match.

A day earlier, Pakistan qualified for semi-final of the event after defeating Malaysia by four goals to one. Second semifinal will be played between India and Malaysia at 8:00 pm and the winner will face Pakistan in final of the tournament on Wednesday.

## Slot jokes Salah knows Man City fate after 'last game' comment

LIVERPOOL (AFP): Arne Slot joked Tuesday that Mohamed Salah must have inside knowledge of Manchester City's fate over alleged breaches of Premier League financial rules after the forward suggested he had played his final game at Anfield against the champions.

City are facing 115 charges related to the alleged breaches and, if found guilty, could face severe punishment, including the possibility of relegation from the English top flight.

Salah, whose Liverpool contract expires at the end of the season, has been at the centre of feverish speculation over his future. The Egypt international said Sunday's 2-0 win against City could have been his last home game against Pep Guardiola's men, who have won six

out of the past seven Premier League titles.

"Probably until now this is the last City game I will play for Liverpool so I was just going to enjoy it," Salah told Sky Sports after the match at Anfield.

"The atmosphere was incredible so I will enjoy every second here. Hopefully we just win the league and will see what will happen."

Slot, whose team have won 18 of their 20 matches in all competitions this season, has become an expert in side-stepping questions on the expiring contracts of Salah, captain Virgil van Dijk and Trent Alexander-Arnold and on this occasion chose to make a joke out of it.

"Maybe Mo knows more about the 115 charges, so he expects them not to be in the Premier League next sea-

son," he said at his pre-match press conference on Tuesday.

"I do expect them in the Premier League. No, the boring answer is always the same. This is not the place, for me, to talk about Mo's contract."

"Maybe I've enjoyed already too much, that would probably get the headlines. But it was a joke. I repeat, a joke!"

City, who have lost six out of their past seven games in all competitions, strongly deny the charges.

Flying start Liverpool, nine points clear of second-placed Arsenal at the top of the Premier League, travel to face mid-table Newcastle on Wednesday.

Slot, in his first season at Anfield after replacing Jurgen Klopp, said his men had worked hard for their success.

"If we would have done

this by just playing on 50 percent and it's so easy for us, then they might feel. 'Ah, we're just too good for this league'," he said.

"But that's definitely not what we feel against every team, no matter if it's City or Liverpool or it was Wolves or Nottingham Forest."

"We had to work really, really, really hard to get the results, and I think that keeps them with both feet on the ground."

And the Dutchman said his players were not getting carried away with their breathtaking start to the season, with success part of the "culture" of the club.

"This club, this team, these players are used to the fact that they are top of the league or they are competing for every trophy, so then it helps that they have experienced this," he added.

## Champions T20 Cup an ideal opportunity to ingrain T20 style, Sarfaraz

ISLAMABAD (APP): Former Pakistan captain Sarfaraz Ahmed, the Bahria Town Champions T20 Cup is an ideal opportunity to ingrain the style of Twenty20 cricket prevalent at the international level in his Engro Dolphins squad.

The Engro Dolphins are one of five sides competing in the event, which will commence at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium on 7 December.

The event is a continuation of the Pakistan Cricket Board's plans to burnish the local talent and aimed at reducing the gap between domestic and international standards. It follows the widely covered and much-appreciated Champions One-Day Cup, held in Faisalabad in September.

Besides Dolphins, Allied Bank Stallions, Lake City Panthers, Nurpur Lions and UMT Markhors will feature in the event to be played on a double-league basis and will culminate on 25 December. Sarfaraz, the mentor for the Engro Dolphins, knows the intricacies of the rapid-fire format, having led Pakistan in 37 T20Is with 29 wins at an impressive win ratio of 78.37 per cent. He hopes to transfer his knowledge to his charges.

"The PCB has been providing ideal opportunities to young players of the country through these events. I hope my players will play T20 cricket in the same manner as

it is played at the international level; robust and fearless," said Sarfaraz.

For Sarfaraz, results are a byproduct of a process which should guarantee the development of the players.

"You may say that results did not come as we would have liked in the Champions One-Day Cup," admitted Sarfaraz, whose team finished last. "But I am satisfied that some of my players, like Sufyan Moqim and Qasim Akram progressed to a good distance and are serving various Pakistan sides."

"Dolphins are intelligent and self-aware besides being curious and fast learners in water, so I want my players to live up to the qualities of that species and use this opportunity - on a wonderful ground like the Rawalpindi Stadium - and learn by leaps and bounds", he said.

For the Bahria Town Champions T20 Cup, the Engro Dolphins squad is a blend of youth and experience. The star attraction will be fast bowler Ihsanullah who ignited the HBL Pakistan Super League 2023 with 22 wickets that led to Multan Sultan finishing runners-up and him being declared player of the series. Sarfaraz hopes Ihsanullah will play at some stage, having been sidelined for nearly two years with an elbow injury.

"The medical panel is monitoring his progress. He has shown his

ability with the ball in the HBL PSL and we all want him to stage a bumper comeback," Sarfaraz said.

Saud Shakeel is expected to anchor a stable batting line-up with power hitters like Pakistan internationals Asif Ali, Faheem Ashraf, Umar Amin and newcomer Mirza Tahir Baig. Wicketkeeper-batter Muhammad Akhlaq will also bolster the slog overs batting. "I want my batters to adopt real power-hitting in the true sense of the word, proper hitting and not hanky panky sloggling," said the team mentor.

Slinger Salman Irshad spearheads the bowling with Faheem Ashraf, fast-rising domestic cricket performer Kashif Ali, young Khubaib Khalil and Shayan Sheikh in supplement act. "We are preparing well in the lead up to the event, so expect us to spring some surprises in the tournament", he said.

Engro Dolphins provisional squad is available on PCB corporate website. The final squad and player support personnel list will be announced in due course.

**Schedule of Engro Dolphins matches (all matches at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium):**

8 Dec -- vs Lake City Panthers (12 noon)  
10 Dec -- vs UMT Markhors (12 noon)  
12 Dec -- vs Nurpur Lions (3.30pm)  
13 Dec -- vs ABL Stallions (11am)  
16 Dec -- vs Lake City Panthers (12 noon)  
18 Dec -- vs UMT Markhors (12 noon)  
20 Dec -- vs Nurpur Lions (3.30pm)  
21 Dec -- vs ABL Stallions (3.30pm).





## In brief

## Dengue decreased

RAWALPINDI (APP): Despite considerable temperature drop, dengue attacks still continue affecting different areas. However after a two-month span, the rate of dengue outbreak in the district reached to single digit cases. According to the statistics released by the District Health Authority, 09 more dengue cases were reported during the last 24 hours. The decline on the previous day was more considerable with only 07 patients in 24 hours. The number of patients admitted in hospitals has also decreased in the same row with only 36 at present. The health authority this year has shown aggressive response to both, counter measure and the surveillance strategy to control the endemic. The two prong strategy was simultaneously executed which is evident from the punitive actions taken by it. Since January this year, financial penalties worth Rs. 20.3 million were imposed on the dengue SOPs violations. Police cases were also registered against the violations with 6215 FIRs registration, and 18899 buildings were sealed during the campaign.

## IRSA releases water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Tuesday released 100,400 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 43,600 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1490.14 feet and was 92.14 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 20,300 cusecs and 55,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1154.00 feet, which was 104.00 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 74,200, 46,600, 36,900 and 7,100 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 11,700 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 2,500 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

## Bakery sealed in Rawalpindi

RAWALPINDI (APP): A well-known bakery in Rawalpindi Cantt was sealed on Tuesday for not issuing point of sale (POS) receipts to its customers. A fine of Rs 500,000 was also imposed on the bakery situated in Harley Street during the operation carried out on the instructions of Chief Commissioner Regional Tax Rawalpindi Tehmina Amir against the commercial outlets not issuing receipts. The team led by Assistant Commissioner of Regional Tax Revenue Muhammad Hamza Nazir and Assistant Director Akbara Khan conducted the operation against the commercial concerns not issuing POS receipts. Muhammad Hamza Nazir told APP that during last days, they had carried out the operation in Abid Majeed Road and Scheme 3 areas. He said the operation was aimed at ensuring collection of tax in business centers in a transparent way. He said that the customers in case of non-issuance of POS receipts should lodge a complaint against the commercial outlet concerned through the "Tax Asan App".



ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi chairing National Action Plan's Coordination Committee meeting. —APP Photo

## Turkiye envoy calls on Khawaja Asif

## F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Irfan Neziroglu, Ambassador of Türkiye called on Minister for Defence and Defence Production, Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Tuesday. Khawaja Asif extended a warm welcome to visiting dignitary and expressed satisfaction over common understanding on regional and

global geo-political situation, said a press release.

The Minister stated that Pakistan and Türkiye enjoy exemplary fraternal relations based on common faith, culture, values, civilization and historical linkages, mutual trust and support. He appreciated Türkiye's strong support for Pakistan on multiple foras. He also stated that

enhanced defence cooperation is an important aspect of our bilateral relationship, characterized by Joint projects, Joint Exercises and Military Training.

Both sides acknowledged the strong relationship between two countries and committed to further expand collaboration in the mutually beneficial fields.

## Govt providing opportunities to youth

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State for Information Technology and Telecommunication, Shaza Fatima Khawaja, on Tuesday reaffirmed the government's commitment to providing opportunities for youth in various sectors, including IT. Digitization would reduce bureaucratic hurdles and significantly enhance efficiency in the country she said while speaking at the UNDP Digital Skills Graduation Ceremony for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa youth.

She highlighted the pivotal role of young people in national development. She said that the government is offering a range of IT courses to equip students with essential skills. The minister said training programs are being conducted to familiarize youth with diverse IT-related fields, encouraging them to contribute to society through dedication and hard work.

The minister underscored the government's dedication to advancing the IT sector by leveraging all available resources.

She stressed that digitization remains a top priority, aiming to provide online access to services to streamline processes and boost productivity. She also highlighted the importance of specialized courses, such as cloud computing and artificial intelligence, in driving the digitization agenda.

She elaborated on the "One Patient, One ID" initiative, explaining that patients' medical records would be accessible online, enabling healthcare providers to retrieve their complete history using their ID card. She said that the system would help save a patient's entire medical record, which would be accessible across all hospitals operating in the federal capital, including basic health units.

"This will eliminate the need for patients to visit the hospital where they had initially received medical care. They can visit any hospital in the federal capital, and the doctors there will access their medical records using the identity issued under the 'One Patient, One Identity' system," she added. She called on the private sector to support these efforts to ensure broader implementation and success.

## Naqvi chairs key meeting of NAP's coordination body

## F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi chaired an important meeting of the National Action Plan (NAP) Coordination Committee in Islamabad on Tuesday. During the meeting, it was decided to enhance coordination between the National Counter Terrorism Forces in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to deal with terrorism, adding that the police and Frontier Constabulary would be strengthened. He underscored that everyone had to work together to improve the law and order situation. He said that along with increasing capacity, the police of all provinces should be equipped with modern technology.

The interior minister announced to fulfil the needs of law enforcement agencies on a priority basis and directed all agencies to submit a report on their requirements to the Interior Ministry within seven days. He highlighted that NACTA would play a leading role in the fight against terrorism, reforms have been initiated in NACTA

present an effective mechanism in the next meeting.

The interior minister condemned the recent incidents of terrorism in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He emphasised that full cooperation would be provided to improve the professional capabilities of the Counter Terrorism Forces in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to deal with terrorism, adding that the police and Frontier Constabulary would be strengthened. He underscored that everyone had to work together to improve the law and order situation. He said that along with increasing capacity, the police of all provinces should be equipped with modern technology.

The interior minister announced to fulfil the needs of law enforcement agencies on a priority basis and directed all agencies to submit a report on their requirements to the Interior Ministry within seven days. He highlighted that NACTA would play a leading role in the fight against terrorism, reforms have been initiated in NACTA

and the original role of NACTA is being restored.

During the meeting, the arrangements made for the security of Chinese citizens were also reviewed. Interior Minister directed for full implementation of the fool-proof security plan for the protection of Chinese citizens. He further said that Coast Guards would be strengthened to prevent narcotics smuggling in coastal areas.

Furthermore, the meeting also reviewed the progress on the decisions made for counter-terrorism including the establishment of the Counter-Terrorism Authority in Islamabad.

National Coordinator NACTA Khalid Khattak gave a detailed briefing regarding the implementation of the decisions of second review meeting.

Federal Secretary Interior, National Coordinator NACTA, IGs of all provinces, IG Railways Police, Commandant Frontier Constabulary, IG Islamabad Police, and senior officials of the Ministry of Interior and law enforcement agencies also attended the meeting.

## Hajj applications deadline extended to 10th

## F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Chaudhry Salik Hussain on Tuesday announced that all Hajj applications received by December 3, 2024, have been approved, bringing great relief to applicants.

The minister revealed that all pilgrims who submitted their applications between November 18 and December 3 under the regular Hajj scheme are declared successful. Similarly, applicants under the sponsorship scheme have also been

approved without the need for a draw.

Addressing the challenges faced by residents of remote areas in submitting their applications, the minister announced a seven-day extension for Hajj application submissions. Applicants under the Government Hajj Scheme can now submit their forms at designated banks until December 10, 2024.

Chaudhry Salik Hussain further clarified that if applications exceed the allocated quota, a ballot will be conducted to ensure fairness. Overseas Pakistanis are required to deposit their

sponsorship funds by December 10 to confirm their participation.

To streamline the process, the Ministry has introduced an online portal accessible via its official website, allowing applicants to submit their Hajj forms from home. Additionally, pilgrims are advised to download the 'Pak Hajj' mobile app for the latest updates and guidance. This move will help simplify the application process and ensure maximum convenience for aspiring pilgrims.

## WPC remains steadfast in its dedication

## F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: MPA Sindh, Ms. Shaheena Sher Ali Baloch called on the Secretary Women's Parliamentary Caucus (WPC) Dr. Shahida Rehmani, MNA at the Women's Parliamentary Caucus in Parliament House, on Tuesday. Secretary WPC Dr. Shahida Rehmani warmly welcomed to MPA Ms. Shaheena Sher Ali Baloch.

During the meeting, Secretary WPC Dr. Shahida Rehmani emphasized WPC's significant achievements, particularly the establishment of women's parliamentary caucuses at the provincial level. She reaffirmed the WPC's commitment to providing assistance and unwavering support to these newly formed caucuses as they take on the vital mission of empower-



ing women.

Dr. Shahida Rehmani lauded the Sindh Assembly for its commendable legislative progress, including the enactment of the Child Marriage Restraint Act and legislation addressing domestic violence. She underscored the importance of such milestones as critical steps toward safeguarding women's rights and well-being.

Moreover, Dr. Shahida Rehmani stressed on further enhancing cooperation and coordination between the Women's Parliamentary Caucus of Sindh Assembly

and WPC of National Assembly. She called for united efforts to further the shared objective of women's empowerment across Pakistan, ensuring that no region is left behind in this transformative journey.

Dr. Shahida Rehmani reaffirmed the commitment of WPC to promote the well-being of women across Pakistan and stated that the Women's Parliamentary Caucus remains steadfast in its dedication to advancing gender equality and addressing the challenges faced by women throughout the country.

## Railways earn Rs 33b in five months

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways has achieved an unprecedented earning of over Rs. 33 billion during the initial five months of the current financial year 2024-25 with the untiring efforts of the department, despite facing several financial challenges.

"The department has earned this revenue from passengers and freight trains, while surpassing the target through the consistent efforts and hard work of the Railway workers," official sources in the Ministry told APP. Pakistan Railways has achieved a historic financial milestone through generating Rs. 33 billion revenue over the past five months, reflecting a 14 percent year-on-year growth compared to Rs. 29 billion during the same period last year.

"This marks an incremental gain of over Rs four bil-

lion, attributed to enhanced operational efficiency and strategic revenue optimization," the sources revealed.

The robust performance follows a record-breaking financial year 2023-24, during which Pakistan Railways earned Rs. 88 billion in revenue, a 40 percent increase from Rs. 63 billion in the previous year.

The sources said Pakistan Railways surpassed its initial revenue target of Rs. 73 billion, earning Rs. 47 billion from passenger trains, Rs. 28 billion from goods vehicles, and over Rs. 13 billion from land and other sources. About the Main Line-I (ML-I), they highlighted that groundwork for the ML-I project, a key infrastructure initiative, is set to commence by next year, signaling long-term growth and profitability for the organization.

"This achievement is a testament to the hard work of our employees. We aim to further boost revenue to Rs. One trillion in the next financial year," they added.

To a question, the sources said that Pakistan Railways has beefed up preventive measures to reduce passenger train accidents. Only eight minor accidents with no causality took place on the entire railway network in the country. The drastic decrease in accidents has been witnessed due to the efforts being undertaken to reduce trespassing at unmanned level crossings and unauthorized locations, they added. "Our staff is continuously monitoring the railway tracks across the country and conducting thorough inspection of the trains as the safety of the passengers is the top priority of the department," the sources said.

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Tuesday issued a power suspension programme for Thursday (December 5) 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 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM. Islamabad Circle, Jhang Saidan, Karur, F-6 Blue Area, Pandorian, Sohwaran Road, Khanna Dak, G-8, Ayub Market, G-10/4, I-9/4, Old Exchange, G-13/4, Golden Heights, Shahpur, Kaldana, Dhola, Kotli Satyan, Balawra, Pir Sohawa Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle, Ghousia Colony, PTCL, Hyderi Chowk, National Market, Asghar Mall, Muzammil Town, Fazahiya, Tariq Shaheed, Airport, Zafarul Haq, Iqbal Road, Major Masood, Jamia Masjid, Gowalmandi, Dhok Najo, Mangtal, Asghar Mall, People Colony, Dhok Chaudhry, Captain Amir Shaheed, Jhangi,

Pindhon, Mohan Pura Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Bank Road-II, Dhok Farman Ali, Rahmataab, II, Jail Park-I, RCCI Express, Sarwar Shaheed, Sohan, FF Hospital, Pepsi Cola, Wilayat Complex, Gulistan Colony, Pindi Board, AOWHS, Park View, Major Riaz, PGHS, Dhanyal, UC Lakhani, Jhawara, Chahan, Chowk, Pandori, Japan Road, Nar, KRL Colony, THQ, Kambili Sadiq, Nara Matur, Mandra, II, Pind Jatia, Bahr Kalial, Syed Kasran, CB Khan, II Feeders, Attock Circle, Sher Shah Suri, Taxila, HMC Road, Nisar Shaheed, Museum, Kohistan Enclave, Punjab Small Industries, Paswal, Purmiana, Garhi Afghana, Islamabad, Babarakh, Kohsar Valley, Hazro, Gondal, Ghorghashti, Aminabad, Shadi Khan, Sarka, Attock Cantt, Kharapa, Garibwal, Azim Shaheed, Murat, Bhinder, Kamrial, Laniwala, Anjar Feeders, Jhelum Circle, Ajmal Shaheed, Langarpur, Mandi Bhalwal, Shukriya, Sarai Alamgir, Chhapran, Shamsabad, F-6 Machine Mohalla,

Pakhwal, City Housing, M Riaz Shaheed, Gadari, Padial, Nathwala, Saffdar Shaheed, F-12 Singhoi, Mumtaz Shaheed, Dinah, 4 City, Hayat Sir Road, Sohawa Kutchery, Baba Shaheed, Karsal, Islampura Feeders, Chakwal Circle, Bahapur, Ara Bazar, Mureed, Kallar Kahar, Sarpak, Daulatala, Latifal, Durgi Rajgan, Sarkal, C.S. Shah, Darya Jalap, Lilla Town, K.S. Maniz, Sagarpur, Hasal, D.S. Bilawal, Dhok Ghazan, Dharnaka, Dharnal, Kot Gula, Kot Shera, Lawah, Pachand, Sukka, Malkwal, Mugla, Dharmand Feeders, GSO Circle, From 09:00 AM to 04:00 PM, Holy Family, Katarian, Banni Chowk, Tufail Shaheed, Alipur, Charah, New Lab, II, Panstick-I, Sohan, AOWHS, I, Parkview, IST, Zaraj, I, Sarwar Shaheed, Wilayat Complex, Jail Park-I, RCCI Express, Pindi Board, FF Hospital, Pepsi, Zaraj-II, Zeta Mall-I, Sakasra, Lawah, Dharnal, Lahtrar, Balawra, Karor, Kotli Sattian feeders and surrounding areas.

## PCCR delegation called on Speaker Sindh PA

## F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A delegation led by Honourable Convenor of the Parliamentary Caucus on Child's Rights (PCCR) Dr. Nikhat Shakeel, MNA met with Speaker of the Provincial Assembly of Sindh, Syed Awais Qadir Shah during their visit to the Sindh Provincial Assembly in Karachi today. The meeting aimed to establish a Provincial Child Rights Caucus in the Sindh Assembly and to build a collaborative framework to protect children's rights.

During the meeting, the Convenor of the PCCR Dr. Nikhat Shakeel highlighted the importance of addressing the alarming issue of 26.3 million out-of-school children, terming it a "national emergency." She added that every child, regardless of gender or socio-economic background, must have access to quality education and healthcare.

Dr. Nikhat Shakeel, the Convenor of the PCCR, commended Sindh's ongoing efforts to tackle malnutrition and provide critical



healthcare services through initiatives like the ChildLife Foundation emergency centers. She stressed the need for collective action. "This is not just about policy; it is about shaping a future where every child is valued and protected," she further remarked.

Speaker Syed Awais Qadir Shah while emphasizing the importance of eradicating polio, called for nationwide unity and intensified efforts to eliminate polio once and for all. Speaker proposed to host a "National Convention on Child Rights" at the Provincial Assembly of Sindh which would serve as a platform for policymakers, stakeholders, and child rights advocates to collabo-

rate on strategies to address the multifaceted issues faced by children across Pakistan.

The delegation welcomed the proposal of the Speaker and lauded Sindh's proactive approach to child rights and pledged their support for the proposed convention and broader legislative efforts. The meeting concluded with Speaker Shah ensuring that the Provincial Child Rights Caucus and the proposed National Convention become catalysts for change. The delegation of Parliamentary Caucus on Child Rights delegation comprised MNAs Mr. Hassan Sabir & Syed Ali Qasim Gillani, and officers from the National Assembly Secretariat.



ANDMA sign MoU

KABUL (BNA): The Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA) has signed MoU with Asia Social Services International Institute to provide targeted assistance to those in need. Mawlawi Mohammad Alam, General Director of Finance and Administration and Acting Head of the ANDMA, emphasized the importance of effective and purposeful collaboration between both the ANDMA and international organizations to adequately address public needs.

Healthcare advancements

BAZARAK (BNA): Public Health Directorate of Panjshir has reported a significant improvement in healthcare access, with 90% of residents now benefiting from medical services. This development has been attributed to hospital upgrades and the acquisition of modern medical equipment. Dr. Hujjatullah Mohammadi, Director of Public Health, stated that a recent survey conducted across the province's center and districts indicates noticeable advancements in healthcare delivery.

Asia is comparable to a living body composed of soil and water. The heart that beats inside the body is Afghanistan. The destruction of Afghanistan would be the destruction of Asia. And in its progress and prosperity lies the well-being of Asia. - Allama Iqbal

## Kam Air to launch Kabul-Doha flights

KABUL (TOLONews): Officials at Kam Air have announced that flights between Kabul and Doha will begin in two weeks, on December 17.

According to the officials, this will be the first time direct flights from Kabul to Doha, the capital of Qatar, have been offered.

"We will soon connect Kabul to Doha, the center of Qatar, for the first time. Planning has been underway for some time, and we have considered three flights per week. Initially, we have planned for flights on Tuesdays, starting from December 17, God willing," said Jahed Azimi, the Chief Executive Officer of Kam Air.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation stated that Afghanistan currently has direct flights to ten countries, and the initiation of direct and transit flights to Qatar will provide more convenience for passengers.

Previously, Ariana Airlines also operated flights from Afghanistan to Qatar.

"This is an alternative route that promotes competition and benefits passengers by providing another option. Recently, we signed a memorandum of understanding with Qatar, based on which direct flights between the two countries were initiated. Now Kam Air is starting its flights to Afghanistan," said, Imamuddin Ahmadi, spokesperson for the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation.

## Release efforts ongoing for Afghans detained



KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations has reported that nearly 4,000 Afghan citizens are imprisoned in the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia.

Abdul Mutalib Haqqani, spokesperson for the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations, stated that Afghan citizens have been arrested for various offenses in these countries, and efforts are ongoing to secure their release and transfer their cases to Afghanistan.

rently incarcerated in prisons in neighboring countries, and efforts have also been made to transfer these prisoners back to Afghanistan.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations announced that in the past year, 5,700 Afghan migrants were released and repatriated from countries such as Iran and Turkey.

"The government has obligations, and one of its important duties is to defend the rights of its citizens abroad. It must provide all necessary conditions, such as legal representation. We have embassies, and they should perform this duty," said Yousuf Amin Zazi, a political analyst.

"Diplomatic negotiations between countries should take place, and at the same time, the Ministry of Refugees and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should make decisions in this regard so that prisoners are released and handed over to Afghanistan," said Hadi Qureshi, a military affairs expert.

## EU emphasizes support for people with disabilities

KABUL (Khaama Press): On International Day of Persons with Disabilities, the European Union delegation in Afghanistan emphasized its commitment to continuing support for individuals with disabilities.

On Tuesday, December 3, the EU delegation posted on their X account, confirming their ongoing commitment to providing assistance to people with disabilities in Afghanistan.

The delegation also highlighted the severe challenges faced by people with disabilities, particularly when it comes to healthcare access.

Each year, December 3 is celebrated as International Day of Persons with Disabilities, underscoring the need for support for people with disabilities worldwide.

However, since the Taliban's return to power, individuals with disabilities, especially former military personnel who have been injured, find themselves in a dire situation. They face increasing hardships, with very little assistance or support available to them.

Over 200,000 persons with disabilities have been registered since the Taliban

took control. Yet, they remain in a desperate condition, struggling to survive without proper medical care, financial support, or infrastructure to assist them.

The lack of comprehensive healthcare and rehabilitation services further exacerbates their vulnerabilities.

The international community and organizations like the EU are faced with the critical task of addressing these unmet needs, as the situation for individuals with disabilities continues to worsen in Afghanistan.

## Afghanistan seeks Iranian expertise — to advance agriculture and livestock



KABUL (BNA): A delegation from Afghanistan's Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock, led by Deputy Minister Mawlawi Sadr Azam Osmani, has traveled to Iran to enhance agricultural collaboration and attract investment.

According to a statement from the ministry's media office, the delegation plans to introduce Afghanistan's agricultural and livestock opportunities to Iranian investors, offering assurances to encourage their investments in the sector.

The delegation is also scheduled to meet officials from Iran's Ministry of Agriculture Jihad.

Discussions will focus on strengthening bilateral relations in agriculture and addressing existing challenges to foster mutual cooperation.

## Ban on women's education

KABUL (Khaama Press): Students enrolled in medical programs at various health institutes in Afghanistan report that they were not allowed to attend classes on Tuesday.

Female students studying midwifery and nursing confirmed to Khaama Press that they were informed to stay home until further notice.

One student from a medical institute in western Kabul told Khaama Press that they were prohibited from entering their classrooms, and the staff vaguely informed them that "classes are temporarily suspended." When students protested, the authorities at the institute explained that the Taliban had issued an order to close the institutes until further notice.

This directive from the Taliban regime, which is believed to have been communicated verbally, has sparked widespread reactions. Khaama Press attempted to contact the spokesperson and officials from the Ministry of Public Health of the Taliban for comment, but they declined to provide any responses by the time this report was compiled.

Robert Dickson, the Charge d'Affaires of the UK Embassy for Afghanistan, condemned the ban on girls' education in medical fields. He posted on social media platform X (formerly Twitter) that this move by the Taliban is another violation of women's rights to education and further limits access to healthcare for Afghan women and children.

This decision comes at a time when Afghanistan urgently requires over 18,000 midwives, highlighting the serious implications for the country's healthcare system, particularly for women's health.

The suspension of education for women in medical programs is part of an ongoing series of restrictions placed on women's rights in Afghanistan under the current Taliban regime.

The move is likely to exacerbate the already dire healthcare situation, particularly for women and children, who have limited access to medical care. This decision has drawn international condemnation and calls for the restoration of basic rights for women in Afghanistan.

## UK envoy condemns Taliban's ban

KABUL (Amu TV): The UK's chargé d'affaires to Afghanistan, Robert C. Dickson, on Tuesday expressed deep concern over reports that the Taliban have banned women from pursuing medical education, describing the move as a severe blow to women's rights and healthcare access in the country.

"I am deeply concerned about new reports that the Taliban will deny medical education to women in Afghanistan," Dickson said in a statement. "This is another affront to women's right to education and will further restrict access to healthcare for Afghan women and children."

The Taliban's new decision bars women from attending medical and semi-professional institutes, effectively eliminating one of the few remaining avenues for Afghan women to pursue higher education.

The move has drawn widespread criticism from human rights advocates, who warn it will exacerbate Afghanistan's healthcare crisis. The country already faces acute shortages of female medical professionals, crucial for providing care in a society where cultural norms often restrict women from being treated by male doctors.

Since their return to power in August 2021, the Taliban have systematically curtailed women's access to education, barring girls from secondary schools and universities. The new ban on medical education leaves Afghan women with no pathways for higher education.

## 60 development projects launched in Paktika

PAKTIKA (TOLONews): Work on 60 development projects, costing 350 million afghani, has commenced in Paktika districts along the hypothetical Durand Line.

These projects are being implemented in accordance with the directive of the leader of the Islamic Emirate in these areas.

The projects include road construction, health centers, new school buildings, the establishment of safe drinking water networks, and various other initiatives.

"In five districts, we have launched 60 projects costing approximately 350 million afghani. This is great news for the residents of the border areas that have been approved," said Abdul Salam Saadat, the deputy governor of Paktika.

Some residents say they still lack access to basic life amenities.



They call for the implementation of more development projects in their areas.

"This region has been neglected for a very long time, but today, thank God, these projects have been approved for us, and we are grateful," said Sayed Ahmad, a resident of Paktika.

"Schools, roads, and electricity dams have been approved for us," said Mohammad Yasin, another resident of Paktika.

"Many youth have studied across the border, but their documents are not recognized here. It's good that schools are being built here so that young people can obtain Afghan certifications," said Gul, a Paktika resident, remarked.

According to local officials, these projects are being implemented in the districts of Barmal, Shkin, Warmami, Nimatbad, and Tarwi of Paktika province.

## Nangarhar elders call for an end to harmful wedding customs

NANGARHAR (TOLONews): Religious scholars and tribal elders in Nangarhar at a gathering called for an end to the practice of giving girls as compensation (Baad), a reduction in dowry expenses, and the limitation of excessive costs in wedding and mourning ceremonies.

They have established a special commission and issued a 19-article resolution to enforce these decisions.

"Girls should not be given as a resolution to disputes, and dowries should not be paid. Marriage contracts should take place at the bride's father's home so that the groom is well known to the family," said Abdul Mohammad, a tribal elder.

"Discussions were held on expenses related to charity, wedding ceremonies, and mourning costs. It was agreed that no unnecessary expenses would be incurred, and all issues would be collectively decided," said Din Mohammad, another tribal elder.

To implement these decisions, residents and tribal elders have formed a special district-level commission comprising scholars and tribal leaders.

"A special commission has been created to ensure the implementation of these decisions. If anyone violates these agreements, the commission will take immediate action," said Mahmood Jan Agha, a tribal elder. "The dowry should be completely abolished. The number of guests at weddings should be limited, and excessive food preparation should be avoided," said Fazal Rabee, a tribal elder.

"Village elders, scholars, and community leaders have reached an agreement and convinced the people to abandon harmful customs. The community has also pledged to respect these decisions," said Nusrat Kochi, the district chief of Surkhrod. Religious scholars stressed the importance of eliminating harmful and costly customs to promote social progress and reform.

"The excessive expenses we incur in mourning and wedding ceremonies are both against Islamic teachings and inhumane. These practices often lead to debt," said Afghan Mujahid, a religious scholar in Nangarhar.

"Unfortunately, dowries have become very expensive in the country and are beyond the reach of young people. As a result, many are forced to migrate abroad," said Islamuddin, a resident of Surkhrod.

This social gathering comes after a previous decree by the leader of the Islamic Emirate calling for an end to harmful and costly customs.

## Working children in Jawzjan call for education, support

JAWZJAN (TOLONews): A number of working and orphaned children in Sheberghan, the capital of Jawzjan province, have called on the caretaker government and aid organizations to support and provide financial assistance.

Abdul Qayum, a 14-year-old boy who has been doing hard labor for the past six years to meet the needs of his seven-member family, has asked for opportunities for work and education.

He expressed his request to TOLONews as follows: "We have seven people to feed, and I am the one providing for the family. I ask the Islamic Emirate to help us so that we can study and have a better future."

Many working children in Jawzjan have been deprived of schooling due to economic problems.

They are asking the caretaker government to create opportunities for their education.

"I work from morning to evening and earn 150 to 200 afghani. I use this money to buy bread and



meet household needs. I ask the Emirate to help us so that we can study," said Idris, one of these children.

"I use 150 afghani for bread and 40 afghani to buy sesame halva. I ask the Islamic Emirate to help us so that we can study and become doctors or engineers in the future," said Hayatullah, a child.

The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs said it will not only support working children but also provide them with vocational and technical training opportunities.

"Our goal is to address the issues of working children and encourage them to learn skills suited to their abilities. By activating technical and vocational centers, we aim to prevent

children from engaging in hard labor," said Samiullah Ebrahimi, the spokesperson for the ministry.

According to statistics from the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, approximately 10,000 orphaned and abandoned children are currently being cared for and educated in orphanages under the ministry across the country.

## Afghans comprise majority of foreign prisoners in Iran: Official

KABUL (Khaama Press): Askar Jalalian, the Deputy Minister of Justice in Iran, recently stated that over 8,000 foreign prisoners are currently held in Iranian prisons, the majority of whom are Afghanistan nationals.

In his conversation with the Iranian news agency ISNA, Jalalian revealed that these Afghan prisoners are primarily charged with drug trafficking, smuggling banned goods, theft, and even murder, with the most common offense being related to drug trafficking.

He emphasized that Iran's criminal laws are very stringent, particularly in dealing with drug-related crimes.

Jalalian also mentioned that he recently held a meeting with Afghan officials as the head of the committee for transferring prisoners.

The result of this meeting was the creation of a list of Afghan prisoners, which will be handed over to Afghan authorities.

Once their identities are verified, steps will be taken to facilitate their transfer back to Afghanistan. However, the Taliban administration has not yet made an official statement on this matter.

Afghan prisoners in Iran, many of whom have been convicted for non-violent crimes, face severe legal and humanitarian challenges. They are often denied access to the legal system, making it difficult for them to defend their rights or appeal their sentences.

Many do not have access to an attorney, and their legal representation, when available, is often inadequate. This lack of access to proper legal processes contributes to a sense of helplessness and injustice.

Afghan prisoners in Iranian jails endure ongoing harassment and torture, facing brutal treatment from prison authorities. Reports have indicated that many prisoners experience physical abuse, lack of basic medical care, and poor living conditions.

Furthermore, they are often separated from their families for long periods, with limited communication or visits allowed. The emotional and psychological toll of being cut off from family and subjected to inhumane treatment is immense.

Many of these prisoners have no avenue for accessing legal assistance or international support, leaving them trapped in a system that offers them no recourse.

The lack of legal representation means that they are unable to challenge their sentences or seek justice for the violations of their human rights. This situation is particularly dire for those who have been imprisoned for minor offenses or crimes they may not have committed.



## IHC stops NAB from action against its ex-DG

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Tuesday stopped the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) from taking legal action against its former Director General (DG) Shahzad Saleem on alleged misconduct and served notices to respondents.

IHC's Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir heard the case against initiation of inquiry and charge-sheet against former DG NAB on alleged misconduct. The petitioner's lawyer prayed to the court to stop the bureau from taking legal action against his client and declare the inquiry against him as illegal.

The court stopped the action of NAB against the petitioner till the judgment on the case and also served notices to NAB for December 16. The court also sought a complete inquiry report and para-wise comments against the plea. The petitioner's lawyer said that the bureau had already conducted an inquiry into the matter previously and closed it.

He also gave a reference to the top court and said that the charge sheet after resuming the inquiry is against the code of conduct. It may be mentioned here that petitioner Saleem Shahzad had been serving as DG NAB Lahore.

## Imran urges unity in party ranks

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: PTI founder Imran Khan clarified on Tuesday that his wife, former first lady Bushra Bibi, led last week's Islamabad protest under his instructions, addressing internal party criticism over the protest's outcome and urging unity among party leaders.

A post on Imran's X account issued the content of his talk with journalists today, during which he addressed the matter and categorically said: "I had instructed Bushra Bibi on how to take the protest to Islamabad. Whatever she did, she did as per my instructions." Calling for unity in the party ranks, Imran said that leaders and workers needed to "unite and organise themselves and prepare for the next phase of their struggle for true freedom against the mafia that has imposed itself on the country".

Imran said he was informed today about the events that transpired last week and termed them as the "darkest chapter in the history of Pakistan". "I have demanded from the Supreme Court to form an impartial judicial commission to investigate the massacre of innocent and peaceful citizens and to give severe punishment to those who ordered the massacre and those involved in it," he was quoted as saying.

Imran said the PTI would not stay quiet on the matter and would continue to raise its voice on the issue. He said he was still consulting others on the issue and gathering more details, adding that he instructed the party leadership to file cases against Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and those responsible. "The data of hospitals in Islamabad and Rawalpindi regarding the martyrs and injured should be made public as soon as possible and CCTV footage of all hospitals and Safe City should be preserved so that evidence cannot be lost like on May 9."

"I have instructed my party and the KP CM to take responsibility for the care and welfare of the families of the martyrs and the injured. Spend all energy for the recovery of those who are missing and encourage the teams of lawyers who are pursuing the cases of those who are arrested," he was quoted as saying.

The source had said that Bushra Bibi "was aggressive. She was defiant", adding that she refused to listen to KP Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, instead demanding that the party chairman speak to her directly through a video call, but this was not possible due to technical and other issues. Originally, the sources had said that Bushra Bibi was supposed to stay back in Peshawar, but the dynamics changed completely when she suddenly decided to hop on the truck and lead the protest herself.

# KP CM distributes degrees among students

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, attended the 4th convocation of Iqra National University as the chief guest on Tuesday. During the event, he distributed degrees and medals among the graduating students. A total of 438 graduates received degrees in various disciplines, including 280 Bachelor's, 120 Master's, and 38 PhD degrees. Additionally, 34 students who excelled in their respective fields were awarded gold medals.

Addressing the convocation, Chief Minister Gandapur congratulated the graduates, their parents, and teachers, acknowledging their hard work in

achieving this milestone. He encouraged the graduates to continue their dedication and use their knowledge and skills to serve the nation.

"There is no substitute for hard work. It is the students' effort that leads to success, and Allah rewards that effort," he remarked. Urging the graduates to embrace challenges and never give up, the Chief Minister said, "Learn to compete, stay resilient, and remember that a single failure cannot deter you from progress. Move forward with faith, courage, and sincerity."

He emphasized the importance of celebrating others' achievements, stating, "A person who rejoices in others' success becomes truly great, and to achieve collective progress, we

must rise above jealousy and animosity."

Commending the efforts of Iqra University's administration, the Chief Minister lauded their contribution to education, noting, "I am delighted to attend the convocation of a university that has achieved significant progress in a short time. No institution can grow without the support of the government, people, and private sector. As Chief Minister, I fully support the private sector."

He also stressed the need for private and public sectors to groom the youth for national and international competition. Concluding his address, Gandapur paid tribute to the sacrifices of the people and security forces in ensuring peace in the province.



ISLAMABAD: Chinese ambassador to Pakistan, Jiang Zaidong called on Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

## PHC grants protective bail to Bushra Bibi

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has granted protective bail to wife of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founding chairman Bushra Bibi till 23rd December, on Tuesday.

PHC's Justice Waqar Ahmed, heard the petition and granted Bushra Bibi protective bail till 23rd December. The court also directed the Additional Attorney General to submit a report on the cases registered against Bushra Bibi within two weeks.

The counsel Alam Khan Adeenzai advocate informed the court that several cases had been registered against the petitioner in Punjab following the protest at D-Chowk. However, the details of these cases are not known. He requested the court to grant more time to the petitioner to appear in the relevant courts, as more than 50 cases have been registered against her.

The court, while granting protective bail to Bushra Bibi, observed that it cannot grant excessive time to the petitioner as the winter vacations are approaching. The court directed Bushra Bibi to appear in the relevant courts within the given time frame.

In a separate development, the Peshawar High Court also heard a petition filed by Bushra Bibi seeking details of the cases registered against her. The court, comprising Justice S.M. Atique Shah and Justice Sahibzada Asadullah, heard the petition and directed the Additional Attorney General to submit a report on the matter.

PHC observed that the question is raised against the maintainability of the petition and directed argue on the matter. The court also granted time to Bushra Bibi's lawyer to prepare his arguments on the maintainability of the petition. The court heard Bushra Bibi's petition for protective bail in 27 different cases registered against her.

## SC Bench hears missing persons' case

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Supreme Court of Pakistan's constitutional bench summoned reports from all concerned agencies in hearing of the missing persons case. The bench issued notices to the Attorney General, Ministry of Interior and other parties in the case.

Justice Jamal Mandokhel remarked that thousands of persons have been missing. "Only statements will not resolve the issue". "The Parliament has been the supreme institution, it should prove itself supreme," Justice Mandokhel remarked. "A general or joint sitting of the parliament should be convened to resolve the issue," bench observed.

"The government wants to seek final solution of the issue," Deputy Attorney General said in the court. "The cabinet has constituted a sub-committee that will file its recommendations over the matter", he said. "Those returned, did they inform who was behind their disappearance," Justice Hassan Azhar Rizvi questioned. "The missing people, not divulge any thing, except saying that they went to the Northern Area for rest," Justice Mandokhel remarked. "If you have to set an example of a missing case, you have to become courageous," Justice Naem Afghan said. "Some missing persons cases malign the state," he added. "A liberation war also ongoing in the name of missing persons, no one is prepared to stand in the system," bench remarked.

# KP assembly discuss road looting incidents

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly here Tuesday discussed the incidents of looting passengers on Buner-Mardan Road at gunpoint. At the onset of assembly proceedings, treasury member, Taj Muhammad Tarand highlighted the incidents of looting at Buner-Mardan Road.

He said that incidents of looting have been reported from the area despite that police check posts have been established on that section of the road. He regretted the performance of police and said that public should be granted permission to keep firearms for protection. He demanded that matter should be referred to relevant standing committee.

Abdul Muneem Khan said that people of Shangla are also been affected by

looting incidents. He said that police station is only hundred meters away from the spot from where looting has been reported.

Fazal Shakoor Khan suggested a meeting of police officials and concerned MPAs to address the problem and concerns of area people. Provincial Law Minister, Aftab Alam Advocate, a commission would be established to safeguard rights of overseas Pakistanis belonged to KP province. The commission would be headed by a government officer of Grade 20 or above while Chief Minister would be the chairperson.

Two members of provincial assembly would also be members of the commission that would present its performance report after every four months. The commission would also send complaints of overseas Pakistanis to relevant authorities for addressal.

arranged in this connection.

Meanwhile, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly approved Overseas Pakistanis Commission Amendment Bill 2024. Under the bill, that was tabled by Provincial Law Minister, Aftab Alam Advocate, a commission would be established to safeguard rights of overseas Pakistanis belonged to KP province. The commission would be headed by a government officer of Grade 20 or above while Chief Minister would be the chairperson.

Two members of provincial assembly would also be members of the commission that would present its performance report after every four months. The commission would also send complaints of overseas Pakistanis to relevant authorities for addressal.

# Implementation of minimum salary directed

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Subcommittee of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Information and Broadcasting on Tuesday directed the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and PEMRA to ensure that all media houses pay 37,500 minimum salary fixed by the government. The 1st meeting of the committee was held here under the convenorship of Syed Aminul Haque to discuss the current state of payment of salaries and outstanding dues and to suggest measures for ensuring rights of media workers.

The committee further directed the concerned authorities to stop advertisements of media houses in case of defiance, and take immediate steps to eliminate the system of third-party contracts in media houses and take measures to increase the number of Implementation

Tribunal for Newspaper Employees (ITNE) to 5 as soon as possible. Syed Aminul Haque directed to take steps in accordance with the policy for complaints regarding dummy newspapers and payment of PBA dues.

Secretary Information and Broadcasting, Ms. Ambreen Jan, Chairman PEMRA Muhammad Saleem Baig, Chairman ITNE Shahid Mehmood Khokhar and Principal Information Officer Mubashir Hasan briefed the Committee on redressal of grievances and payment of salaries to journalists and media workers. Earlier, the committee was apprised by the various representatives of the journalist bodies including NPC, PFUJ, RIUJ, PRA etc. about the non-payment of timely salaries, absence of job security, lack of fringe benefits to journalists.

The meeting was attended by Secretary Information

Broadcasting Ms. Ambreen Jan, Chairman PEMRA Muhammad Saleem Baig, DG (IP) Ashique Hussain, Chairman Implementation Tribunal for Newspaper Employees (ITNE) Shahid Mehmood Khokhar, members of the committee, members of the Assembly, Ms. Sahar Kamran, Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri and Moazzam Ali Khan. Representatives of Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) GM Jamali, Afzal Butt, Nasir Zaidi, Ail Pakistan Newspapers and Electronic Media Employees Confederation's Mohammad Siddique Anzhar, National Press Club's Azhar Jatoti, Parliament Reporters Association's Usman Khan, Rawalpindi Islamabad Union of Journalists' Shakeel Khan, Tariq Warraq, Pakistan Broadcasters Association's Basit Riaz Sheikh, APNS and CPNE representatives were also present on the occasion.

# Israel threatens to expand war if Hezbollah truce collapses

BEIRUT/JERUSALEM (Reuters): Israel threatened on Tuesday to return to war in Lebanon if its truce with Hezbollah collapses, and said this time its attacks would go deeper and target the Lebanese state itself, after the deadliest day since the ceasefire was agreed last week.

In its strongest threat since the truce was agreed to end 14 months of war with Hezbollah, Israel said it would hold Lebanon responsible for failing to disarm militants who violated the truce. "If we return to war we

will act strongly, we will go deeper, and the most important thing they need to know: that there will be no longer be an exemption for the state of Lebanon," Defense Minister Israel Katz said.

"If until now we separated the state of Lebanon from Hezbollah... it will no longer be [like this]," he said during a visit to the northern border area. Despite last week's truce, Israeli forces have continued strikes in southern Lebanon against what they say are Hezbollah fighters ignoring the agreement to halt attacks and withdraw

beyond the Litani River, about 30 km (18 miles) from the frontier.

On Monday, Hezbollah shelled an Israeli military post, while Lebanese authorities said at least 12 people were killed in Israeli airstrikes on Lebanon. Katz called the Hezbollah attack "the first test" and described Israel's strikes as a strong response. The Beirut government must "authorize the Lebanese army to enforce their part, to keep Hezbollah away beyond the Litani, and to dismantle all the infrastructure," Katz said.

# PM urges global action

(Continued from Page 1)

The prime minister also shed light on the 'Recharge Pakistan' initiative that aimed to address, climate induced, flood risks, and mitigate drought impacts, through ecosystem based adaptations. "We are also finalizing a 'National Drought Plan' that identifies the most drought affected areas, and proposes, effective response mechanisms, to mitigate, the impact of drought in these areas," he said.

The prime minister proposed a six-point agenda at the global level to overcome water-related challenges. He advocated for the need of international cooperation and collaboration, to "ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all", as provided for in the SDG-

6, exchange of knowledge and expertise, as well as transfer of technologies on innovative water management on priority, adequate funding for climate-resilient infrastructure, and overcoming financing gap—a critical challenge for climate vulnerable countries, frameworks for transparency, data sharing, and regional cooperation, to avoid conflicts, and promote water sharing, investment in skills development, research, and institutional strengthening, to tackle water challenges, at national and global levels and finally, a strong political will, and global leadership, to overcome the water crisis.

He commended the visionary leadership, and initiative of Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia, Crown Prince Mohammad bin

Salman, to establish, the Global Water Organization. "We are proud to join this initiative, as one of its founding members and look forward to providing, all possible support, in achieving its important goals," he said.

The prime minister amid conclusion recalled the joyful scenes of children playing along the rivers that traversed his home city, Lahore, and the fisherfolk and their boats along the River Ravi. "These cherished memories serve as a poignant reminder of what is at stake. As leaders, policymakers, and custodians of the future, it is our duty to ensure that these rivers, lakes, and aquifers that have nourished civilizations for centuries must not be reduced to tales of the past," he emphasised.

# Chinese Ambassador calls on PPP Chairman

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Chinese ambassador to Pakistan, Jiang Zaidong called on Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari at Zardari House Islamabad on Tuesday afternoon.

Chairman Bilawal and ambassador Zaidong discussed promotion of bilateral relations, social and cultural cooperation and also discussed matters of mutual interests. The former minister for foreign affairs, Hina Rabbani Khar was also present at the occasion.

Meanwhile, Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has extended warm congratulations to Pakistan's blind cricket team for winning the T-20

World Cup and expressed his best wishes for the players. He remarked that this is a fabulous gift from differently-abled Pakistanis to their nation on the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, and truly a source of great pride for the entire country.

According to a press release issued by the Media Cell Bilawal House, Chairman PPP, in his congratulatory message, commended the players for their exceptional hard work and skill, stating that their victory has brought immense pride and joy to the nation. Addressing the players, he remarked, "Your dedication, perseverance, and indomitable spirit have proven that no obstacle is insurmountable. You are an inspiration to millions." He also expressed

hope that the blind cricket team would continue to achieve greater successes for the country in the future.

Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari emphasized that this achievement is a testament to the talents and determination of persons with disabilities in Pakistan and reflects the nation's potential to excel in every field. He reaffirmed the Pakistan Peoples Party's commitment to expanding opportunities for persons with disabilities, particularly in sports.

The Chairman concluded by reiterating that the PPP remains steadfast in its mission to empower and uplift individuals with special needs, ensuring they have equal opportunities to thrive in all spheres of life.

# Saif demands shifting of injured to KP hospitals

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations, Barrister Dr. Saif, has strongly responded to Ata Tarar's press conference, stating that Ata Tarar is indulging in exaggeration to promote himself.

Barrister Dr. Saif further remarked that the federal government is forcibly recording videos of detained and injured personnel to cover up its failures. He added that if Atta Tarar were subjected to the same violence as the workers, he might even claim responsibility for the attack on Ahmad Shah Massoud in Afghanistan. The

Information Advisor stated that demanding footage of the protests is clear evidence of Ata Tarar's incompetence and lack of awareness. He suggested that Ata Tarar should view the videos available on social media, which clearly show workers being fired upon.

Dr. Saif emphasized that there are also videos showing the bodies of protesters, and this oppression cannot be concealed. He demanded that the injured personnel be transferred to hospitals in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and urged the federal government to refrain from further pressuring them. Criticizing the federal government, Dr. Saif accused them of attempting to deceive the nation through fabricated

videos. He advised Ata Tarar not to present fake footage to the media and to accept the reality.

Barrister Dr. Saif also pointed out that international media footage provides undeniable evidence of the federal government's brutality and oppression, which cannot be hidden from the world. He questioned why the injured workers are in hospitals if no harm was done to them. He concluded by stating that firing on protesters and then subjecting them to torture in custody is a grave injustice. Dr. Saif reaffirmed that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government will continue to raise its voice on every platform to protect the rights of the people.



ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naved Ashraf exchanging views with Ambassador of Türkiye to Pakistan, Dr. Irfan Neziroglu at Naval Headquarters.

# PTI demands for judicial probe into Nov 24 incident

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Salman Akram Raja, the Secretary General of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), has strongly rejected claims that Imran Khan was poisoned or sprayed with any harmful substance.

Speaking to media, Raja dismissed these rumors as "wrong and fabricated," asserting that there was no truth to the claims of such an attack on the former prime minister.

Raja also discussed his recent meeting with Imran Khan in prison, where he found the PTI leader in good health and exercising. However, Khan expressed

deep sadness over the tragic incident involving the PTI protests on November 24. Raja revealed that the PTI has confirmed the deaths of 12 individuals, with the expectation that the number could rise, as further victims are identified.

The Secretary General further raised concerns about the hundreds of people still missing after the protests. He cited statements from the Inspector General of Punjab, who confirmed the arrest of 800 individuals, though only 150 have been presented in court. Raja questioned the whereabouts of the remaining detainees, raising fears that they may have been abducted.

Regarding the sit-in protest, Raja confirmed that Imran Khan had agreed to participate in the planned demonstration but stated that it was an internal PTI matter. He pointed out that the real issue remains the firing of shots at protesters and demanded accountability.

Currently, PTI is not in communication with the government or the other stakeholders, as tensions continue to rise over the handling of the protests and the allegations surrounding the treatment of its leaders. The call for a judicial commission inquiry into the events of November 24 is growing louder within the party.