

Six killed, seven injured
F.P. Report
MABDI BAHAUDDIN: A deadly explosion in a house in the Phalia area of Mandi Bahauddin district Punjab has claimed the lives of at least six people and left seven others injured. The explosion reportedly triggered by a fire in stored fireworks also led to a partial collapse of the building. The explosion occurred when fireworks kept inside the house caught fire setting off a powerful blast.

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Electric wheelchairs
F.P. Report
PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur has announced the provision of electric wheelchairs to persons with disabilities, said the spokesperson for the Chief Minister on Saturday. Under this initiative, all persons with disabilities from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will receive the electric wheelchairs, the spokesperson confirmed.

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22m children out of school in Pakistan

PM for collective efforts at sustainable educational opportunities for females

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday called upon the global and local organizations, philanthropists and entrepreneurs to join hands in creating scalable and sustainable opportunities for ensuring education to women.

Addressing a two-day International Conference on "Girls' Education in Muslim Communities: Challenges and Opportunities," as a chief guest, the prime minister said that in the next decade, millions of young girls would enter the jobs market with immense prospects for social and economic prosperity.

"As they do so, they have the potential to not just lift themselves, their families and the nation out of the poverty but also to enrich the global economy, new markets and find innovative solutions to their shared challenges," he observed. The prime minister also stressed that they should assure the womenfolk that their rights should be respected and their ambitions be met, besides, no cultural or social impediment stood in the way of achieving their dreams.

He said despite their rich legacy, the Islamic world, including Pakistan, was facing numerous challenges in ensuring access to education for girls, adding that denying education to girls, amounted to denying their rights and voice and denying them their right to bright future.

In Pakistan, the prime minister said women made half of the total population, yet the female literacy rate stood at 49 percent only, while alarmingly around 22.8 million children, with age bracket of five to eight years, were out of schools, including a proportionate number of girls. The inadequate infrastructure, safety concerns, as well as deeply entrenched

PM hopeful about outcome of Int'l Conference on Girls' Education

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday expressed his optimism that the current ongoing international conference on girls' education in Islamabad would go a long way and help them put their acts together to promote education among females in the Islamic countries.

Addressing a meeting of the visiting ministers and authorities of education from various Muslim countries, the prime minister expressed gratitude to them for their participation in the conference of high importance in the present-day challenges. He said Pakistan faced different challenges in promoting education for girls. Around 22.8 million children in the country were out of schools and majority among them were girls, he added. The prime minister referred to his earlier speech in the conference wherein he had highlighted the significance of female education as emphasised upon by the Islamic teachings and the instructions of the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him). He said that they were ready to share their experience with the relevant authorities in the education sector, adding a committee had been formed in the country over reforms in this sector which was also coordinating with all the provinces.

societal norms further exacerbated the issue, creating a cycle of deprivation, spanning over generations, he regretted.

The prime minister said the founding father Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah was a strong advocate for women's role in nation building. Quaid-e-Azam had stated "No nation can rise to the height of glory unless your women are side by side with you," and advised that the magnitude of these problems might be considerable but they should keep fighting for their cause by committing resources and raising their voice, he recalled.

The prime minister further elaborated that one of the major steps to addressing the educational disparities in Pakistan was the establishment of Danish schools during his tenure as chief minister Punjab. It was a unique initiative to provide quality education to the deprived population and to the unprivileged students in the underdeveloped rural areas. Without this

opportunity, their talent would have been lost in the dusty streets of their remote villages, he added.

The prime minister said this initiative was now replicated in different far-flung areas of Pakistan, paving way for a promising and inclusive future. He also expressed his satisfaction over presence of girl students in the ceremony, who had graduated from these schools.

Their presence was a testimony to their efforts and culmination of a collective dream as these students embodied the hope and nation's bright future, he added. The prime minister said through the youth programmes, the government was committed to providing quality education and creating jobs, and offering meaningful opportunities which included scholarships, vocational training and demand driven skills in AI, data and cyber security etc; as well as, provision of free laptops to the high achievers.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif witnessing exchange of MoUs between Muslim World League and OIC at International Conference on Girls' Education.

PTI founder moves LHC for bail in May 9 cases

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan approached the Lahore High Court (LHC), seeking post-arrest bail in several May 9 cases registered against him.

The PTI founder maintained in the plea that he was in National Accountability Bureau (NAB) custody in Islamabad on May 9 and had nothing to do with the violence on the day. Imran Khan termed the cases against him as an act of 'political revenge'.

Imran Khan told the court that he has been subjected to 'political victimization' and facing several 'fabricated' cases for two years, requesting the court to approve his post-arrest bail. The PTI founder approached the LHC after his bail plea was rejected by the Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) in eight May 9 cases including the Jinnah House attack.

"The ATC has rejected the bail applications, contrary to the facts," Imran Khan argued. Earlier, PTI founder's sister Aleema Khanum said that Imran Khan has decided to plea his case at the International Human Rights Organisation (IHRO). Talking to journalists outside Adiala Jail, Aleema Khan alleged that the PTI founder is being denied the right to communicate with his children. She further claimed, "He is not allowed to meet his doctor, and this treatment amounts to torture."

Aleema claimed that 'no court is willing to hear their petitions.' "The PTI founder has said we have no other option left now," she revealed. She mentioned that the PTI founder plans to take his case to international human rights organizations. Aleema Khanum also shared that the PTI founder laughed heartily at Rana Sanaullah's press conference. "Our family is receiving threats and warnings," she disclosed, adding, "We have taken on a responsibility as a family."

Establishment focuses only on power: Fazl

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) Emir Maulana Fazlur Rehman has criticised the establishment, saying that its behaviour remains unchanged, as it disregards the notions of right and wrong and focuses solely on retaining authority.

"Their only concern is maintaining their power. The establishment ridicules the people's vote so why shouldn't the public mock the establishment in return?" he said during a press conference in Karachi on Saturday. Fazl asserted that the establishment's claims of being apolitical were inherently political and remarked: "Even martial law regimes have managed to complete their terms in power".

The JUI-F chief also highlighted a specific instance of electoral interference, saying: "They ensured the victory of a candidate who couldn't win even a single polling station. Such practices continue to erode the sanctity of democracy and the constitution". The veteran politician further expressed dis-

appointment with politicians who, in his view, compromise on democracy, constitutional principles, and basic values. "Our grievances with political leaders who fail to uphold democratic norms and are only interested in vested in their own rule," he lamented.

His remarks come as the religio-political party has protested against the alleged alteration of results in the by-election for Balochistan Assembly's PB-45 constituency. The recently held by-polls saw Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) candidate Haji Ali Madad Jatak winning by securing 6,883 votes followed by Pashtoonkhwa National Awami Party's (PkMAP) Nasrullah Khan Barech in the second place with 4,122 votes.

JUI-F's candidate Mir Muhammad Usman Pirani managed to secure 3,731 votes to secure third place. On other matters, Fazl mentioned that all national issues should be resolved through consensus. "We have to improve the country's [existing] system," he said.

Speaking on education

reforms, the JUI-F leader said that parliamentary legislation has already been enacted to regulate and register madrassas, and acknowledged that relief had been provided in their registration process through a presidential ordinance. "We do not object to these reforms, but we must ensure they respect the autonomy of these institutions," he emphasised. Regarding recent developments, the politico revealed that his meeting with Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi was of a personal nature.

"He often visits my residence, and our discussions remain private," he clarified. Commenting on the economy, he urged for transparency, saying: "The truth about the nation's economic condition must be revealed". Reiterating his respect for Federal Education Minister Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, Fazl took a jibe at the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) leader and said: "Though he is the federal minister for education, he often comes to my house to 'study' various issues."

Karak road accident claims 12 lives, injures 25

F.P. Report

KARAK: A horrific traffic accident on the Indus Highway at Ambiri Kallah Chowk has claimed the lives of at least 12 individuals and left 25 others injured.

The incident occurred when a 22-wheeler trailer, reportedly suffering from brake failure, collided with a passenger flying coach and several other vehicles. Rescue operations are still ongoing, with authorities working to extricate more bodies from the wreckage.

According to the Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Karak, the crash occurred late in the afternoon and immediately resulted in multiple fatalities. The oil tanker trailer, which was unable to halt due to the malfunctioning brakes, overturned onto the passenger coach, crushing it under its weight.

The force of the collision caused a chain reaction, affecting several other vehicles on the highway. "The trailer's failure to stop led to a catastrophic chain of events. The coach was completely crushed under the trailer, causing immense loss of life," said DC Karak. The authorities have issued a red alert across local hospitals, preparing for a surge of injured victims, some in critical condition.

Rescue teams have managed to pull several survivors from the wreckage, with the injured being transported to the District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital in Karak. Medical teams are on high alert as the situation continues to develop. Emergency responders and local authorities are still working tirelessly to remove the bodies from the debris, and the death toll is expected

to rise as more casualties are discovered.

Meanwhile, the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur on Saturday expressed profound sorrow over the loss of lives in an accident on Indus Highway in Karak district. The Chief Minister extended heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families and prayed for the deceased forgiveness and strength for their loved ones.

The Chief Minister also directed authorities to provide all necessary medical facilities to the injured. He conveyed his best wishes for the swift recovery of those injured in the accident. He also expressed solidarity with the grieving families, stating that the provincial government shares their sorrow at this critical time.

New FBR system to contribute in uplift

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday said that the faceless customs assessment system would contribute to Pakistan's economic development and was a significant step towards the digitization of Federal Board of Revenue (FBR).

The prime minister expressed these views during a meeting with Chief Collector Customs, Karachi Zone Jamil Nasir who called on him, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. The prime minister praised the chief collector customs and his team at Customs Karachi zone for their outstanding contributions in the development and implementation of the faceless customs assessment system.

The prime minister announced a reward of 15 million rupees for the team working on the development and implementation of the faceless customs assessment system. The prime minister said that due to customs assessment system, there had been a significant improvement in transparency, efficiency, and service delivery in customs operations.

Pakistan's progress linked with Karachi's development

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that the development of Karachi is mandatory for country's progress. He said that Asif Ali Zardari provided ample resources to Karachi when he first became the President of Pakistan.

The PPP chairman on Saturday inaugurated the first phase of 9.1 kilometre long Shahrah-e Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto from Qayyumabad to Shah Faisal interchange. "Zulfikar Ali Bhutto played an important role in improving the infrastructure of Karachi and provided employment to its people," said Bilawal.

The PPP chairman said that his family is contributing in the development of Karachi for last three generations. "Benazir Bhutto always tried to restore peace in Karachi," the PPP chairman said. He added that the project will resolve the traffic issues and it will connect Karachi with other parts of the country.

The PPP chairman said that the federal government isn't providing the due rights of Sindh and there-



approximately 40km, the expressway connects Korangi Creek Avenue (DHA) to the M-9 Motorway (Superhighway) near Kathore, offering a critical link for commuters and significantly reducing travel time.

fore they opted for public-private partnerships in Karachi. Bilawal said that Asif Ali Zardari is aware of problems being faced by the traders and he always tried to provide them relief.

CM Shah, addressing the same event, admitted that the construction of Shahrah-e-Bhutto, the newly-constructed Malir Expressway, was completed after a long delay. He said that ex-premier Benazir had approved a package 30 years ago that included expressway projects in Lyari and Malir and others.

The chief minister said that the PPP chairman had asked the provincial administration not to use the names of his family members in the development projects, however, the government made a special request to Bilawal to allow them to name this road after his grandfather due to its significance. Spanning

include dedicated interchanges, providing seamless access to key residential and commercial areas along the route. The first section will feature a ramp to facilitate immediate traffic flow and will be complemented by a connecting flyover from Korangi, which is expected to be completed within two months. The construction of the Jam Sadiq Interchange and road rehabilitation projects at the EBM and Shah Faisal Interchanges are progressing steadily. Encroachments at the Quaidabad Interchange have been cleared, and construction is ongoing to enhance connectivity.

A Toll Plaza will manage traffic flow, charging Rs100 for cars and jeeps, and Rs200 for heavy vehicles. Security measures will include patrols by traffic police, fire brigades, and Rescue 1122 ambulances.

Battle against Los Angeles fires gains ground as intense winds ease

LOS ANGELES (Reuters): Firefighters finally started gaining control over two major wildfires on the eastern and western flanks of Los Angeles as fierce winds that supercharged the fires for days finally eased. Six simultaneous wildfires have devastated Los Angeles County neighbourhoods since Tuesday, killing 10 people and destroying nearly 10,000 structures, with those figures expected to grow.

With thousands of people suddenly homeless and the thickening smoke leading US officials to declare a public health emergency, firefighters reported progress in arresting the Palisades Fire on the western edge of the city and the Eaton Fire in the foothills east of the sprawling metropolis. After burning out of control for days, despite the efforts of hundreds of firefighters attacking the blazes from the air and on the ground, the Palisades Fire was 8 per cent contained and the Eaton Fire 3 per cent. Cal Fire said both containment levels had been 0 per cent until Friday.

Even so, the fires combined had

consumed more than 313,700 hectares - or 137sqkm - two-and-a-half times the land area of Manhattan. "We are doing everything we can to bring the situation under control, and success has been reported," Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass said at a news conference. "We know that we're going to have a possible increase in the force of the winds at the beginning of next week, and getting Los Angeles prepared - doing everything we can to save lives - that is our No 1 job."

Conditions in the Los Angeles area will improve through the weekend, with sustained winds slowing to about 32kmh, gusting between 56kmh and 80kmh, according to the National Weather Service, a respite from recent wind gusts of 130kmh. Any easing would allow more crucial support from aircraft dropping water and fire retardant on the flaming hills. "It's not as gusty, so that should help firefighters," NWS meteorologist Allison Santorelli said, adding that conditions were still critical with low humidity and dry vegetation.

Farther south in San Diego, winds will pick up, with sustained winds of 64kmh and gusts up to 110kmh, creating dangerous fire conditions over the weekend, she added. Pacific Palisades residents who ventured back to their devastated neighbourhoods were shocked to find brick chimneys looming over charred waste and burnt-out vehicles as acrid smoke lingered in the air. "I can't describe it," 44-year-old psychiatrist Kelly Foster said as she combed through the ashy rubble where her home once stood. "I have no words."

Officials have imposed a curfew in mandatory evacuation zones for the Palisades and Eaton Fires to prevent looting. California National Guard members also have begun to arrive to free up firefighters and police. On Friday morning, hundreds of people streamed into a parking lot near the Rose Bowl stadium in Pasadena for donated clothing, diapers and bottled water. Eventually, police forced the makeshift aid centre, set up near the epicentre of the Eaton Fire, to make way for the growing number of first

responders staged nearby.

Denise Doss, 63, said authorities earlier had stopped her from checking on the nearby Altadena home she shares with her 86-year-old father, citing risks of burning embers and potentially ruptured gas lines. Another Altadena resident picking up supplies, 78-year-old Everett Wilson, said his home escaped the flames but he worries about looters: "I just don't want someone to take my stuff." Meanwhile, false evacuation messages sent by an automated alert system further frayed the nerves of Angelenos. Officials vowed to fix the problem.

Tens of thousands of homes were without power, and air quality is a major concern. Many Altadena residents said they were worried government resources would go to wealthier areas and that insurers might shortchange those who cannot afford to contest denials of fire claims. Catastrophic losses are already weighing on insurers, which are bracing for billions of dollars in potential claims. Private forecaster

AccuWeather estimated the damage and economic loss at US\$135 billion to US\$150 billion, portending an arduous recovery and soaring homeowners' insurance costs.

California Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara called on insurers on Friday to suspend pending non-renewals and cancellations that homeowners received before the fires began and to extend the grace period for payments. Biden has declared the fires a major disaster and said the US government would reimburse 100 per cent of the recovery for the next six months. In a call with Mayor Bass and California Governor Gavin Newsom on Friday he reiterated his pledge to provide California with resources to fight the blazes and rebuild.

On Jan 20, the Democratic president hands over the reins of government to his successor, Republican Donald Trump. The president-elect, along with his allies, has sought to blame the Democratic state and local officials as well environmentalists for the Los Angeles disaster, which sci-

entists say is the latest in weather extremes triggered by climate change.

The fires erupted across Los Angeles after months without rain and the arrival this week of fierce Santa Ana winds blowing hot, dry air over the region outside the traditional fire season. City and fire officials have said hydrants in the urban area were not designed to handle such a massive, unprecedented wildfire. Officials are still investigating what ignited the blazes, as flames continued to raze homes and landmarks while evacuations, closures and sports relocations continued.

Los Angeles police interviewed a possible arson suspect related to the Kenneth Fire near Calabasas but lacked enough probable cause for an arrest on that charge, Assistant Police Chief Dominic Choi told reporters on Friday. Edison International unit Southern California Edison said insurers asked it to preserve evidence related to the Eaton Fire but that no fire agencies have connected the utility to the blaze.

www.joinpaf.gov.pk www.joinpaf.gov.pk

Governor takes notice of Karak traffic accident

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Saturday taken notice of the tragic traffic accident in Karak district Ambery Kelay, and sought reports on the incident that claimed the lives of 10 persons.

Governor Kundi has directed health department officials to provide all possible medical assistance to the injured. He also issued instructions to the teams of the Red Crescent to carry out relief activities.

Additionally, Governor

Kundi called on Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) workers to actively participate in relief efforts in Ambery Kelay and donate blood to aid the victims.

Following the incident, the Vice Chairman of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Red Crescent, Farzand Ali Wazir, arrived at the accident site promptly at the request of Governor Kundi.

He coordinated with local authorities, supervised relief operations and ensured the clearance of roadblocks.

During visit, he also met with officials from the health department and other relief agencies, commending their efforts in managing the emergency response.

Meanwhile, Governor Faisal Karim Kundi expressed sorrow over the death of 12 workers, including 10 from Shangla, in Quetta coal mine accident.

The Governor prayed for the departed souls in eternal peace and grant courage to bereaved family members to bear this irriparible lose with fortitude.

Fazal Haq College: A quality educational centre

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Provincial Food Minister Zahir Shah Toru has said that Fazal Haq College Mardan is a quality educational institution with a glorious past. The political leadership of Mardan will play its dur role for its bright future.

He was addressing a high-level meeting in the college's committee room. Senator Zeeshan Khanzada, DDAC Chairman Zarshad Khan, Members of Provincial Assembly Abdul Salam Afridi, Tariq Mehmood Ariani, DEO Male Zahid Khan, DEO Female Samina Ghani, Principal Higher Secondary School Baghdad Ashraf Ali and other relevant officials participated in the meeting.

The principal of the college, Professor Jahanzeb Khan, while giving a briefing, said that a comprehensive strategy has been drawn up to restore the

glory of Fazal Haq College and to further enhance the quality of education here, which includes strengthening the infrastructure of the college and further improving it.

The future plan, he added included establishment of a School of Artificial Intelligence and Computing Sciences and a School of Linguistics in the college along with the launch of A Level and BS classes in the college.

He said that a summary has been sent to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for the restoration of the ancient Sher Shah hostel of the college and other facilities, the approval of which will pave the way for solving many problems of the college.

Food Minister Zahir Shah Toru, Senator Zeeshan Khanzada and Assembly members Abdul Salam Afridi, Zarshad Khan and Tariq Mehmood

Aryani said that the name of Fazal Haq College is respected throughout the country and students from all over the country had been coming to get quality education in this prestigious institution.

Preferring to read. They assured that they will fully support the development and expansion of this college. Zahir Shah Toru said that the development of education is the top priority of the present provincial government and a significant amount has been set aside for the development of the education sector in the provincial budget. He said that provision of necessary resources to Fazal Haq College will be ensured.

On this occasion, the provincial minister and members of the assembly also planted saplings in the college ground under the plan to plant one and a half lakh saplings on behalf of the principal of the college.

KMU finalizes clinical trial plan for locally prepared medicine

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Medical University (KMU) has finalized arrangements for conducting clinical trials of an indigenously developed herbal medicine aimed at treating Cutaneous Leishmaniasis (CL), a painful and disfiguring skin disease that has seen a significant rise in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

"Preparations for the final testing of this herbal ointment, developed by two scientists from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, have been completed," disclosed Dr Khalid Rehman, Director Public Health KMU.

The clinical trial, scheduled to last around six months, will involve three groups of patients undergoing different treatment procedures to evaluate the medicine's effectiveness, Dr Khalid informed APP.

The treatment modules include standard practice of administering glucantime injections, photodynamic therapy (PDT) in collaboration with Irum Hospital and application of the locally

ly prepared herbal medicine. Trails would be held at a hotspot of CL infection area, preferably Malakand district to expand its coverage scope to Bajaur and Mohmand districts where large number of CL cases are reported. In the trial, duration of treatment by three modules will be monitored besides reaction of medicine and patients comments, Dr Khalid added.

The indigenous herbal ointment, named Leish-Nat Z, is the result of over five years of research by Dr Momin Khan, Associate Professor of Microbiology at KMU, and Dr. Adnan Ameen, Chairman of the Department of Pharmacognosy at Gomal University, DI Khan. Leish-Nat Z is formulated from natural ingredients such as Allium sativum (garlic), Pistacia vera oil, Cinnamomum verum (cinnamon), Syzygium aromaticum (clove), Nigella sativa (black seed), and Azadirachta indica (neem tree).

According to scientists,

Leish-Nat Z is easy to apply and is not painful as Glucantime, a pentavalent antimonial, serving as first line drug for treatment of CL, administered through injecting directly in infected skin. Encouraging preliminary results have already been received from the ointment at all the stage of testing including 'In vitro' (laboratory) and 'In vivo' (in living organism including animal and humans), the scientists claimed.

"If clinical trials produce satisfactory outcomes while meeting international standards, the medicine will move toward commercial production, providing an affordable and effective treatment option for thousands of CL patients in the region", Dr Khalid commented.

DOSTI announces literature festival

PESHAWAR (APP): The DOSTI Welfare Organization has announced the 4th chapter of the Peshawar Literature Festival, titled Rana-e-Khayal.

This grand literary event will take place from February 11 to February 22 at the Area Study Center, University of Peshawar, said a DOSTI press release on Saturday.

During an orientation session for volunteers, Dr. Hanif Rasool, the lead organizer of the festival, shared details about the event, saying that over 200 distinguished speakers will participate in more than 60 diverse sessions covering a wide range of literary and cultural themes. Expanding its reach beyond Peshawar, this year's festival will also engage audiences at Khushal Khan Khattak University (Karak), Chitral University, Kohat University, and FATA University (Darra Adam Khel), reflecting the organization's commitment to promoting literature and culture across the province.

To ensure the success of this large-scale event, 150 volunteers will assist in various capacities. "This festival is a step toward portraying the soft image of our province to the nation and the world," Dr. Rasool emphasized.

The festival will host speakers and participants from across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, as well as Lahore, Karachi, Islamabad, and other cities. In addition to literary discussions, the event will feature workshops and interactive sessions on various topics, catering to a wide range of interests.

The DOSTI Welfare Organization invites literature enthusiasts, academics, and the general public to be part of this vibrant celebration of literature and culture.

Snow Jeep rally to start at Shahi Ground Kalam



PESHAWAR (APP): The 13th Snow Jeep Race organized by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA) would start at Shahi Ground in Kalam on Sunday.

The race was being organized by KPCTA in

collaboration with Upper Swat Development Authority, Frontier 4x4 Club and Pakistan Army. The race include competitions in four categories: Zero to 2500cc, 2500cc to Open, Vintage, and ladies category.

Jeeps convoy from Peshawar has already reached Kalam under supervision of KPCTA and Frontier 4x4 Club.

Advisor to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Zahid Chanzab has said that purpose of the

event was to promote winter and adventure tourism in the province.

He said that the tourism department had also held successful competitions of ice hockey, curling and speed skating at Shandur Top.

Moot on girls' educ to strengthen cooperation to address challenges

PESHAWAR (APP): An international conference on girls' education, held over two days in Islamabad, has garnered widespread praise across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with experts expressing hopes for practical solutions to the ongoing challenges facing girls' education in Muslim communities, aligned with Islamic principles.

The successful holding of the conference has testified Pakistan's unwavering commitment towards promotion of girls education and encourage them to continue higher studies imperative for sustainable progress and prosperity of the future generation.

Professor Dr. Muhammad Ibrahim, former Director of Education, emphasized the importance of the conference for Muslim communities, especially Pakistan.

Talking to APP, he highlighted the various challenges, including misconceptions, economic imbalances, social taboos, and security concerns, that hinder the progress of girls' education.

He pointed out that despite women comprising

half of Pakistan's population, the female literacy rate remains at a concerning 49 percent, with around 22.8 million children aged 5 to 8 years, including many girls, currently out of schools.

Dr. Ibrahim stressed the urgent need for solutions to key issues such as high dropout rates after matriculation due to the lack of educational institutions, transport, socio-economic disparities, and early marriages.

The conference, attended by over 150 international dignitaries—including ministers, ambassadors, scholars, and representatives from organizations like OICs, UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank—aims to create actionable recommendations to tackle these pressing issues. He said poverty and preference to sons over girls higher education in tribal societies increased girls dropout out that needed to be addressed.

Dr Ibrahim appreciated the Federal Government endeavours of providing special financial incentives to millions of poor women for education of their girls under Benazir Bhutto Income Support Program.

In partnership with the Muslim World League (MWL), the Government of Pakistan launched a comprehensive platform to support girls' education in Muslim societies, marking a significant step in advancing educational equality.

Former Ambassador Manzoorul Haq praised Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif's inclusive inaugural address at the conference, which called for unity within the Muslim world to promote girls' education.

Manzoorul Haq outlined the conference's goal to foster international collaborations among governments, Islamic organizations, and global civil groups, thereby building a network across Muslim nations to advance girls' education and contribute to mutual economic development.

The conference also aims to implement the principles laid out in the Charters of Makkah, which advocate for unity and cooperation among Islamic schools of thought and sects, and to honor resolutions adopted by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)

member states.

Ambassador Haq further explained that the conference sends a powerful message to the world that Islam, as a religion of knowledge, peace, and civilization, supports all measures enabling girls' access to education.

He deplored any actions or legislation that prevent girls from accessing education, clarifying that such practices contradict Islamic teachings.

Experts at the conference are focusing on developing strategies to overcome the barriers impeding girls' education and are committed to leveraging existing opportunities to improve educational outcomes.

The ultimate goal is to empower women to contribute meaningfully to their communities and society at large, in line with Islamic principles and the resolutions discussed at the event.

This historic conference marks a critical step in ensuring that girls' education becomes a global priority, particularly in Muslim-majority nations, and that the rights and opportunities of women are upheld across the world.

Minister chairs meeting to discuss investment of Chinese company

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Aftab Alam Afridi Advocate here on Saturday chaired a meeting to discuss investment of Chinese Company in Kohat.

The meeting was also attended by former Federal Interior Minister Shehryar Afridi MNA, Chairman DDAC Kohat Shafi Jan

MPA, Daud Shah Afridi MPA, Deputy Commissioner Kohat Abdul Akram Chitrali, Tehsil Mayor Kohat Qari Sher Zaman, Tehsil Nazim Gumbat Sajid Iqbal, Tehsil Nazim Lachi Ehsan Khan and officials concerned

The meeting thoroughly discussed Chinese company's interest in investing in Kohat in various sectors

especially in farming and livestock. The company was assured on behalf of the provincial government all possible support and facilities.

Chairing the meeting, law minister said, the Chinese investment in the Kohat would not only create new employment opportunities but it will stabilize the local economy

and initiate a new era of development.

He further said that modern technology would be used in livestock and farming sectors.

The minister termed Chinese investment a positive step for the development of Kohat and hoped that it would be a milestone for the progress and prosperity of Kohat.

Why some animals appear to mourn their dead

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Last week, a female killer whale was spotted off the coast of Washington State pushing the body of her dead newborn calf. The orca, known as Tahlequah, was observed doing the same thing in 2018 after another of her calves died in infancy. On that occasion, Tahlequah pushed the body of her offspring for 17 days, continuously retrieving it and preventing it from sinking – an incredible feat given the fact that killer whales can travel an average of 120km (75 miles) a day.

Whales are not the only species known to carry the bodies of their deceased young. In 2021, Edinburgh Zoo reported that one of their chimpanzees, Lianne, had given birth to a stillborn baby and was refusing to let go, carrying the infant around with her within the zoo enclosure. Other highly intelligent mammals, such as dolphins and monkeys, have also been observed behaving this way.

"It's hard to see this behaviour without thinking of it through the lens of grief, partly because, as

humans, if we lose someone we want to cling on to that person in some sense," says Becky Millar, a researcher specialising in the philosophy of cognitive sciences at Cardiff University.

"It seems to be a very literal manifestation of that kind of urge to retain bonds with the dead loved one."

According to Millar, what's notable about these cases is that these animals don't treat the deceased infant in the same way that they would treat a merely immobile, but live infant. This suggests that it's not just a matter of them not understanding that their infant is dead.

"There is some sort of tension where the animal isn't quite able to let go," says Millar. "It's like they're trying to grapple with this new world that they're faced with and trying to come to understand that loss."

There are signs that both humans and animals undergo this readjustment period. For example, Millar points to the fact that animals often search for their companions after their death, while humans also engage in what are called search behaviours following a bereavement,

where they scan the environment for any sign of the deceased person.

Sometimes this behaviour can continue long after the death. Famous examples include that of Greyfriars Bobby, a terrier who spent 14 years guarding his owner's grave in Edinburgh, Scotland, and Hachiko, an akita dog that continued to wait for its owner at a train station in Japan long after his death.

There are also anecdotal stories of animals displaying acute distress after the loss of a close companion. There are reports that upon seeing their babies eaten by killer whales, for example, sea lion mothers wail pitifully in apparent anguish.

There are other examples too. In her book How Animals Grieve, anthropologist Barbara King also describes accounts of cats, dogs and rabbits crying and searching for their companions, and horses gathering around the grave of a member of their herd.

In 1999, an elderly female elephant at an Indian zoo reportedly died of grief after a young elephant she had befriended died during childbirth. The elderly ele-

phant, Damini, was seen to shed tears over her friend's body, before she lost all interest in food and eventually starved to death.

In 1972 Jane Goodall, an English primatologist who has studied chimpanzees in the wild for over 60 years, observed one young chimpanzee known as Flint showing signs of what in humans would be called clinical depression when his mother died. He stopped engaging in social interactions with his group, refused to eat, and eventually died a month later.

Even birds grieve, it appears. Austrian zoologist and ethologist Konrad Lorenz once described the response of greylag geese to losing their mate as "roughly identical with those accompanying human grief". The geese hung their heads dejectedly, lost interest in food, and became indifferent to the world around them.

There isn't just anecdotal evidence. Empirical studies also support the theory that some animals, at least, feel emotions akin to grief. Laboratory studies, for instance, show that infant primates faced with

the sudden loss of their mother go through phases of grief characterised by wailing and crying, followed by a gradual detachment from the world. They no longer play with others, ignore new and exciting objects, and eventually curl up into a ball.

In another study, it was found that female baboons who had lost a close relative had increased levels of stress hormones, a response that is also seen in humans following a bereavement.

Some animals even appear to display ritualistic behaviours after a death, similarly to how humans would hold a funeral. Elephants are known to visit the remains of family members and strangers alike, touching and stroking their bones, and standing for long periods beside the skeleton in a manner akin to a vigil. Chimpanzees are also known to clean the mouths and bodies of the deceased animal. There's even anecdotal evidence that crows, magpies and ravens gather around the dead of their own, sometimes placing leaves or twigs close to the carcass.

"I was riding my bike

with a friend some years ago, and there was a circle of four or five magpies surrounding a dead magpie," says Marc Bekoff, professor emeritus of ecology and evolutionary biology at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

"They were surrounding the corpse with their heads down, sort of lightly pecking at it. Then one flew off and brought some twigs and leaves. Another did the same, and then it was almost like a chorus where they stopped, slightly lowered their head, and flew off."

However, whether these behaviours truly count as grief depends largely on how you define the concept – a philosophical question that is hotly debated. In a recent article on the subject, Millar says that unlike sadness, which is usually fleeting, grief tends to be protracted, lasting for months or years. Another important element of grief is that it also seems to encompass many different emotions. "You might feel sadness, but perhaps also other emotions too like anger or even hope," says Millar.

Grief also seems to involve a complex process

of coming to recognise your loss and its implications.

"Even if you explicitly know that someone has died, there might be another sense in which the loss hasn't yet been integrated into your world and into your habitual patterns of behaviour and thought," says Millar.

"So you might want to lay out a plate for them on the table, or you might still anticipate the sound of their car coming into the drive at 6pm, or that they'll be sitting on their favourite sofa and so on. In some sense you expect them to be there, even though you know that that person has died."

Some philosophers argue that, while some animals undoubtedly feel distress after losing a companion, true grief requires further cognitive capabilities that animals lack. These include the ability to understand the permanence of death, and a recognition that the individual will not be present for future events and milestones in your life.

However, Millar points out that this definition doesn't just exclude animals, it also excludes children and some adults.

"I don't think all human grievers grapple with the nature of mortality, or project themselves to a really distant future as part of their grief. Young children who suffer a bereavement are probably not able to fully comprehend their loss at that stage, but it would seem wrong to say that their grief is lesser."

In her article, Millar defines grief as more about learning in a more practical sense how to live in a radically changed world. She believes that this practical process of adaptation is something that could be open to animals as well, given that it doesn't require highly cognitive, intellectual forms of understanding. Ultimately, Millar believes that many animals are capable of feeling grief.

"I think that other animals can share their lives with one another in quite a rich way and their whole patterns of behaviour can come to hinge upon that other animal," says Millar. So when their companion dies, they too are forced to undergo this kind of protracted process of comprehension and relearning of their world."



In brief

2 vehicle-lifters arrested F.P. Report

FAISALABAD: The Anti Motor-Lifting Squad has arrested two vehicle-lifters and recovered eight motorcycles and other items from their possession. A police spokesman said here on Saturday that the AMLS head by DSP CIA conducted raids and succeeded in arresting two accused Shahid and Ahmad who were wanted to the police in a number of vehicle lifting cases. The police recovered eight stolen motorcycles worth Rs. 735,000 and other items from their possession while further investigation was under progress, he added.

Two brothers shot dead F.P. Report

HUB: Some unidentified assailants on Saturday opened fire on a rickshaw during which two brothers were killed on the spot in Hub area of Balochistan. Both brothers were later identified as Azizullah and Ata Mohammad. Soon after receiving the report of the incident, police team reached the crime scene and shifted the dead bodies of deceased brothers to local hospital for autopsy. Police team after registering a case of murder against unknown assailants started investigation.

190 Kanals land recovered F.P. Report

CHARSADDA: The Anti-Corruption Establishment Khyber Pakhtunkhwa recovered 190 Kanal and 2 Marla of illegally occupied land worth over Rs. 210 million belonging to the KP Housing Authority in Tangi Charsadda. According to reports, Anti-Corruption Khyber Pakhtunkhwa received complaints regarding illegal encroachment on the land by locals. Following a detailed inquiry, it was confirmed that the land, valued at Rs. 21,38,62,500, was unlawfully occupied. In collaboration with the District Administration Charsadda and the District Police Officer, the Anti-Corruption team carried out an operation, reclaimed the land, and handed it over to the Assistant Commissioner of Tangi. Officials stated that after completing the necessary legal procedures, the recovered land will be officially handed over to the relevant authorities. It is noteworthy that the land was being used for agricultural purposes by the local encroachers.

Two persons lose lives F.P. Report

ATTOCK: Two persons have lost their lives as a speedy vehicle turned turtle on Islamabad-Peshawar motorway (M-1) near Burhan as the driver of the vehicle has lost his control due to over speeding near Burhan interchange in the limits of Hassanabad Police station on Saturday, police and hospital sources said. Sources said that Shahzad Khan along with his friend Usman Saqib- both residents of Swabi was going in his vehicle when he loses control due to over speeding and it turned turtle killing him on the spot. Later rescue 1122 has shifted the bodies to tehsil headquarters hospital. Later the bodies were handed over to their heirs after fulfilling legal requirements.

Minister hails role of Fazal Haq College

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Provincial Food Minister Zahir Shah Toru has said that Fazal Haq College Mardan is a quality educational institution with a glorious past. The political leadership of Mardan will play its due role for its bright future.

He was addressing a high-level meeting in the college's committee room. Senator Zeeshan Khanzada, DDAC Chairman Zarshad Khan, Members of Provincial Assembly Abdul Salam Afridi, Tariq Mehmood Ariani, DEO Male Zahid Khan, DEO Female Samina Ghani, Principal Higher Secondary School Baghdad Ashraf Ali and other relevant officials participated in the meeting.

The principal of the college, Professor Jahanzeb Khan, while giving a briefing, said that a comprehensive strategy has been drawn up to restore the

glory of Fazal Haq College and to further enhance the quality of education here, which includes strengthening the infrastructure of the college and further improving it. The future plan, he added, included Establishment of a School of Artificial Intelligence and Computing Sciences and a School of Linguistics in the college along with the launch of A Level and BS classes in the college.

He said that a summary has been sent to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for the restoration of the ancient Sher Shah hostel of the college and other facilities, the approval of which will pave the way for solving many problems of the college. Food Minister Zahir Shah Toru, Senator Zeeshan Khanzada and Assembly members Abdul Salam Afridi, Zarshad Khan and Tariq Mehmood Ariani said that the name of Fazal

Haq College is respected throughout the country and students from all over the country had been coming to get quality education in this prestigious institution. Preferring to read,

They assured that they will fully support the development and expansion of this college. Zahir Shah Toru said that the development of education is the top priority of the present provincial government and a significant amount has been set aside for the development of the education sector in the provincial budget.

He said that provision of necessary resources to Fazal Haq College will be ensured. On this occasion, the provincial minister and members of the assembly also planted saplings in the college ground under the plan to plant one and a half lakh saplings on behalf of the principal of the college.

Law Minister chairs meeting F.P. Report

KOHAT: In order to discuss the interest of investment of the Chinese Company in Kohat, a meeting was held with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister on Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Aftab Alam Afridi Advocate in the chair here on Saturday.

The meeting beside others, was also attended by the former Federal Interior Minister Shehryar Afridi MNA, Chairman DDAC Kohat Shafi Jan MPA, Daud Shah Afridi MPA, Deputy Commissioner Kohat Abdul Akram Chitrali, Tehsil Mayor Kohat Qari Sher Zaman, Tehsil Nazim Gumbat Sajid Iqbal, Tehsil Nazim Lachi Ehsan Khan and authorities concerned of the relevant departments.

The meeting thoroughly discussed the Chinese company's interest in investing in Kohat in various sectors, especially in Farming and Livestock and certain decisions were taken in this respect. The company was assured on behalf of the provincial government of all possible support and facilities. The Law Minister said, the investment of the Chinese Company in Kohat will not only create new employment opportunities but will also stabilize the local economy and usher in a new era of development. He further said that modern technology will be used in Livestock and Farming sectors.

The Minister while welcoming the interest of investment by the Chinese Company, termed it step toward further strengthening Pak-China ties and hoped that it will prove to be a milestone for the progress and prosperity of Kohat and the development works will further be accelerated.

Encroachments removed

FAISALABAD (INP): Faisalabad Development Authority (FDA) has launched a vigorous anti-encroachment operation in Madina Town and removed all temporary and permanent encroachments from various markets by using heavy machinery.

The operation resulted in the removal of illegal structures and the submission of challans against 30 shopkeepers to the court of Special Judicial Magistrate, said FDA spokesman. He said that taking serious notice on public complaints, Director General FDA Muhammad Asif Chaudhry directed the FDA officials to completely eliminate encroachments from Madina Town.

Therefore, under supervision of Director Estate Management-I Junaid Hassan Manj and the FDA team led by Estate Officer Mian Qamar Shehzad removed encroachments from Bismillah Chowk, Jattanwala Chowk, Main Susan Road, SSR, and ISR Roads. The illegal structures such as stalls, counters and other types of encroachments built on public land were demolished and materials from the spot were confiscated.

The shopkeepers were warned to refrain from occupying public spaces and blocking pathways or be ready to face the music as stern action would be taken against the violators without any discrimination, spokesman added. Meanwhile, FDA Director General highlighted FDA commitment to making all residential colonies and commercial markets free of encroachments. He urged the shopkeepers to voluntarily remove illegal structures and said that non-compliance could lead to legal consequences and further damage for which they would be held accountable.

Abducted dispenser freed; three killed



F.P. Report

ZHOB: A dispenser who was kidnapped with his business associate on Wednesday has been recovered safely from the clutches of kidnappers. Local tribes and Levies personnel encircled the kidnappers in the hilly terrain and killed three of them.

On January 8th, some armed men appeared at a local health facility in the Gwal Ismailzai area on the Zhob-Quetta national highway, asking the dispenser, Juma Rahim and his business partner under the pretext of a patient's medical examination. The health practitioners smelled a rat in the intention of the men on the way; however, upon

resistance, the kidnappers shot and killed Masood Khan Kakar on the highway. Due to their vehicle breaking down, they took Juma Rahim away on foot towards the mountains, leaving their vehicle behind.

The news of the tragic incident spread like wildfire in the area, and the local tribes chased the kidnappers at different locations. After 24 hours, the kidnappers were overcome, and the abducted Juma Rahim was freed from the clutches of the kidnappers. The eyewitnesses say, there was also an exchange of fire between the local tribes and the kidnappers that resulted in the deaths of three kidnappers.

Meanwhile, Assistant Commissioner Killa Saifullah Syed Kaleem Zafar claims that a joint operation led by the Levies force and the local tribes finally bore fruit and successfully rescued the abducted man from kidnappers, while three abductors were neutralized, the Levies sources said.

"One kidnapper detonated an explosive device to evade arrest, while the other two were shot dead in an exchange of fire with tribesmen and Levies personnel." States the official statement, adding the operation reflects the determination and courage of the law enforcement agencies and the unwavering support of the local tribes.

Traders hold protests against looting seed shop

F.P. Report

LARKANA: Almost three armed robbers on a motorcycle in the Jails Bazaar area of Haidari Police Station in Larkana city held the owner of the seed and fertilizer shop, Naveed Jagirani, his brother Yasir Ali Jagirani and friend Imran Ali Solangi hostage and robbed them of more than 7 lakh rupees in cash and 2 mobile phones before escaping from the crime scene.

On receiving information, the police reached the spot and found out the details of the incident. On this occasion, the affected

traders protested before the media that they were busy with their business when the armed robbers stormed the shop and looted lakhs of rupees while no police officer was present on duty.

SMBBMU hosts dinner for graduates: The first Alumni Evening was organized by Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Medical University (SMBBMU) Larkana, at Chandka Medical College Larkana, which was presided over by Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Nusrat Shah.

A large number of alumni from all colleges and institutions affiliated with

the university participated in the ceremony and met each other and refreshed old memories. Addressing the ceremony, Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Nusrat Shah addressed the alumni of the university and said that it felt as if you had come to your mother's house today, as if you had come to your home.

He further said that some of the students of Chandka College are eager to do something for their mother's school, among which the former students of batch four are at the top of the list who have done a great job for their mother's school.

Federal govt asked to take steps on PTI demands

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf party leader senator Zishan Khanzada Khan has said that the federal government should take practical steps on the demands of PTI if it was serious about dialogues.

The PTI senator Mr. Zishan Khanzada Khan expressed these views here on Saturday during his visit to Mardan press to congratulate the newly office-bearers. He lamented that the federal government did not seem look serious about dialogues with PTI.

He claimed that the PTI founding chairman did not seek NRO rather he wanted his release on merit as well

as per law and constitution of Pakistan. The PTI believed that every issue and dispute could be resolved through political dialogues, he added.

He blamed that problems and issues were being increased owing to not conducting of free, fair and transparent general elections in the country. The founding chairman of PTI Imran Khan has the final authority to decide each and every issue and affair of the party, he maintained.

He alleged that the disputed judgments had been causing damage reputation and credibility of courts, adding that the orders and judgments should be passed as per the

law and constitution of Pakistan. The tussle between federal and provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was also causing to create problems and difficulties for residents of the province.

Zishan Khanzada Khan went on to say that the KPK provincial government had been performing its due role to maintain law and order situations as well as to restore peace in Para Chinari, kurram Agency. The provincial government was hopeful about restoration of peace in the said area. He urged both the provincial and federal governments to bring itself on one page for sake of restoration of peace in the region concerned.

PDA announces fee concession for journalists

F.P. Report

BUNER: Provincial Doctor Association (PDA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa announced provision of concession in fees during dissemination of health services to journalist's community in Buner, on Saturday.

This was announced by

PDA KP president Dr. Amir Taj along with Buner president Dr. Qadir Khan and general secretary Dr. Javed Khan while congratulating the press club's new cabinet of and assured that a formal notification to be issued in this regard. They further assured it to be circulated to all doctors soon.

PDA expected from journalists to play a full role in highlighting the PDA related problems. They assured the PDA would help Journalists updated on every issue related to health and Journalist would reporting it positively in the public interest.

Pakistan being ruled on IMF, WB dictation: JI

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Jamaat-i-Islami former chief, Sirajul Haq, has said that religious seminars are strong fortresses of Islam where scholars are fulfilling the duty of preaching the teachings of the Holy Quran and Islam to the younger generation. He was addressing a certificate distribution ceremony at Jamia Dar-ul-Salaam Ouch as chief guest here on Saturday.

Haq said that Pakistanis gained freedom from the East India Company but incompetent rulers made them slaves of the IMF and the World Bank. The JI leader said that how unfortunate it was that the IMF was determining the prices of electricity, oil, gas and food items. "The educational curriculum will also be at the discretion of the IMF and other external institutions", he elaborated and added that the decision on

the value of the currency was also entrusted to those institutions.

He said the World Trade Organization would decide which countries and in what terms they had to trade with others. The JI former chief was of the view that the decision on the import of medicines was also at the discretion of the World Health Organization. He said that rulers in Pakistan were also chosen by international lobbyists. "In such a situation, if we are not slaves, what will we be called?", he questioned.

He said that Europe and America were afraid of the dominance of Islam as they had no issue with prayers and individual worship in their country. He said that it is our collective responsibility to bring God's system on the earth and for this we have to unite.

The seminary head Maulana Shah Khalid and

Maulana Hafiz Noor Ahmed Din, also addressed the ceremony, while the JI former tehsil nazim Sultanat Yar Advocate, JI Adenzai emir Dr. Bashir Muhammad, Mushtaq-ur-Rehman and Jehan Bahadur, along with other local leaders, were also present on the occasion. Certificates were also given to dozens of students who completed memorization of the Holy Quran from Jamia Dar-ul-Salaam Ouch.

Youth commits suicide: A youth identified as Aizaz 17, a resident of Serai Shah Alam Baba committed suicide due to unknown reason by shooting himself in the jurisdiction of Ouch police station here on Saturday. The youth was taken to the Chakdara tehsil headquarters hospital wherein the doctors declared him dead. The Ouch police registered a case and started further investigations.

Union frames irregularities in bus stand's auction

F.P. Report

WANA: Motor Car Stand Union (MCSU) rejected the auction of general bus stand conducted and blamed that a specific group has been favored, calling it a blatant act of injustice to incite conflict among local communities. They demanded the unilateral decision be revoked. Otherwise, they would protest in the Wana Bazaar, holding the district administration and TMO South Waziristan Lower responsible for any clashes between communities.

This claimed by MCSU chairman Maris Khan along with president

Hussain Khan, Finance Secretary Ishaq Khan, and others while addressing a press conference and stated that they had legally deposited PKR 485,000 with the former TMO for the NOC and later deposited PKR 800,000 in February 2021. He accused the Tehsil Chairman and the current TMA of colluding to auction the General Bus Stand in Peshawar as part of a premeditated plan, which they strongly condemn.

Union General Secretary Khan Zaman added that awarding the General Bus Stand tender to controversial individuals, Irshad

Khan and Ghulam Rasool, is a conspiracy to create divisions among communities, which they will never allow to succeed. He also highlighted that conducting the tender despite a High Court stay order is a violation of the law and the judiciary.

They appealed to Deputy Commissioner Wana Nasir Khan, Commissioner D.I. Khan Division, and other relevant authorities, stating that the tender was conducted in their absence. They demanded the cancellation of the orders granting the General Bus Stand to Irshad Khan and Ghulam Rasool.

Committee reviews development schemes

F.P. Report

BAHAWALPUR: A meeting of the District Coordination Committee was held under the chairmanship of its chief and parliamentary secretary for the board of Revenue Mian Shoaib Owaisi, MPA.

The meeting was attended by MNA Malik Muhammad Iqbal Channar, MNA Makhdoom Syed Sami Hassan Gilani, Parliamentary Secretary MPA Hassan Askari Sheikh, Mian Ali Abbas Pirzada, Deputy

Commissioner Bahawalpur Dr. Farhan Farooq, District Police Officer Bahawalpur, and administrative officers from relevant departments.

MPA Owaisi stated that development projects should be completed on time and the relevant supervisory officers should enhance the field monitoring process to avoid delays in project completion. Members of the National and Punjab assemblies said that development projects should be completed swiftly. The deputy commissioner briefed the meeting on the ongoing development

projects. It was reported that under the Annual Development Program 2024-25 and the Chief Minister District SDGs Programme, work was ongoing on 238 development projects with an estimated cost of Rs 44 billion. So far Rs 2.91 billion of development funds had been utilised.

The DPO informed the meeting about law and order situation in the district, measures taken to combat crime, traffic management, and the elimination of narcotics.

Our farmer, our pride: Maryam's commitment to farmers' prosperity

Muhammad Shahbaz Ansari

UNDER the leadership of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, Punjab has entered a new era of development and prosperity, with notable initiatives being under taken for public welfare in all sectors. Special focus has been given to agriculture, introducing numerous programs for the uplift and prosperity of farmers, which have sparked hope for a brighter future for Punjab's farmers.

In Toba Tek Singh, the launch

of the "Kissan Card" is one of the most significant steps taken by Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif for farmers. A total of 12,229 farmers in the district have been issued Kissan Cards, providing them with interest-free loans and subsidies through a transparent and accessible mechanism. Through this initiative, farmers in Toba Tek Singh have availed interest-free loans amounting to Rs. 703,875,500.

The Livestock Card is another beneficial scheme, offering interest-free loans to livestock farmers for four months. These loans can be utilized to purchase

feed, silage, and mineral mixtures. In Toba Tek Singh, 425 livestock farmers are benefiting from this initiative, with 411 cards already distributed. These measures are significantly increasing farmers' incomes.

The "Green Tractors Scheme," introduced under the leadership of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, is a revolutionary initiative for Punjab's farmers. Through this scheme, 233 farmers in Toba Tek Singh are being provided with state of the art tractors, of which 115 have already been distributed. The Punjab government is providing a subsidy of Rs. 1 million

per tractor, enhancing both agricultural productivity and energy efficiency.

The Agriculture Graduate Internship Program is another significant initiative by Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, offering fresh graduates the opportunity to connect with farmers and gain practical training. This program not only educates farmers about modern techniques but also creates job opportunities for young graduates in the agricultural sector.

The solarization of tube wells is a vital project for promoting sustainable agriculture in Punjab. This initiative allows

farmers to save electricity and achieve sustainable agricultural growth. In Toba Tek Singh, 226 farmers will be provided with solar systems. Similarly, subsidies are being offered for super seeders, which not only help reduce environmental pollution but also increase crop yields. A total of 25 super seeders have been distributed in Toba Tek Singh, significantly benefiting farmers.

Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif is also planning to establish Agriculture Malls in every city, providing farmers with direct access to markets for their crops and produce. This

initiative will enable farmers to sell their products at better prices, improving their economic conditions. Under the leadership of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, Punjab's farmers are entering a new era where not only is agricultural productivity increasing, but every possible step is being taken to ensure their prosperity. These efforts aim to strengthen Punjab's economy and empower farmers to build a better future, making them the pride of Toba Tek Singh and Punjab.

The writer is District Information Officer serving at Toba Tek Singh.



SK jet crash puts Jeju Air's safety under scrutiny

SEOUL/SEATTLE (Reuters): Before it suffered the deadliest crash in South Korea's history, budget airline Jeju Air was moving fast: racking up record passenger numbers and flying its aircraft more than domestic rivals and many of its global peers, data show. The high "utilisation rate" of Jeju Air's planes - the number of hours they fly in a day - is not problematic in itself, experts say, but means scheduling enough time for required maintenance is crucial.

Authorities have suggested a bird strike contributed to the accident, but as part of their probe into the incident aboard Boeing 737-800, police have raided the airlines' Seoul office to seize documents related to the operation and maintenance of the plane. "You're literally looking at everything," said aviation safety and crash investigation expert Anthony Brickhouse. "You're going to start off with their accident history and safety history. What kind of events have they had in the past, what happened, what was done to correct the issues?"

Jeju Air told Reuters that it did not neglect maintenance procedures and that it would step up its safety efforts. The Dec. 29 crash, which killed 179 people, was the airline's first fatal accident since its 2005 founding and the first for any Korean airline in more than a decade. The company's CEO, Kim E-bae - who has been barred from travelling overseas during the investigation - told a news conference last week that Jeju's maintenance is in line with regulatory standards and that there were no maintenance issues with the doomed jet during pre-flight inspection.

He acknowledged the airline's safety measures had

not been sufficient in the past, but said improvements had been made. The authorities have not said poor maintenance contributed to the crash and the exact circumstances behind the disaster remain unclear.

Besides the reported bird strike, authorities are looking into why the pilot may have rushed a second landing attempt after declaring an emergency, and why the landing gear was not deployed. Investigators have recovered the cockpit and flight data recorders but have not released any details.

The country's transport regulator is inspecting all 101 737-800s in South Korea - more than a third of which are operated by Jeju Air - focusing on how often and how well the planes were maintained, among other considerations. Although it had recorded no violations in the last two years, it was hit with more fines and suspensions for aviation law breaches than any of its domestic rivals in 2020-2022, just during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, records show.

According to transport ministry data on major airlines from 2020 to August 2024, Jeju Air was hit by about 2.3 billion won (\$1.57 million) in fines and the affected aircraft were kept out of operation for a total of 41 days, according to Reuters calculations based on the data. The next-most penalized airline, T'way Air, had 2.1 billion won in fines and four days of suspended operation during that period.

Jeju Air flies its planes more than any other major airline in the country, data show, and also outpaces most global peers such as Ireland's Ryanair and Malaysia's AirAsia. Jeju Air 7C2216 was flying from the Thai capital of Bangkok to

Muan in southwestern South Korea at night when it belly-landed, overshot the runway and burst into flames after hitting an embankment. The aircraft flew every day in 2024, according to flight data reviewed by Reuters. High utilisation rates are prized in the industry as an indicator of economic efficiency, especially at low-cost carriers, experts say.

Jeju Air, which ranks behind only Korean Air and Asiana Air in terms of passenger volumes in the country, saw record numbers from January to December 2024, according to transport ministry data. Its monthly utilisation hours for passenger jets nearly doubled to 412 in 2023 from 2022, higher than Korean Air at 332 hours and Asiana Airlines at 304 hours, according to stock exchange filings. T'way averaged 366 hours per month in passenger and cargo jets combined, Jin Air averaged 349 hours, and Air Busan 319 hours, according to their filings.

In 2024, Jeju Air flew its airplanes more each day - 11.6 hours - than almost any other airline offering cheap tickets and flying only narrowbody aircraft, according to data from aviation analytics company Cirium, which calculates utilisation rates differently from the earnings filings. Only Saudi Arabia's Air Arabia flew its planes more - 12.5 hours a day. Vietnam's VietJet flew its planes 10 hours a day. Ryanair's average use was 9.3 hours, while Malaysia's AirAsia was 9 hours. China's Spring Airlines flew 8 hours a day. "The utilisation itself is not a problem," said Sim Jai-dong, a professor of aircraft maintenance at Sehan University in South Korea. "But there could be higher fatigue for pilots, crew members and mechanics given the higher utilisation rates."

Lebanon to extradite son of al-Qaradawi to UAE

CAIRO (Reuters): Lebanon is set to extradite the son of late senior Muslim cleric Youssef al-Qaradawi to the United Arab Emirates after the country's caretaker cabinet approved the move, the Lebanese prime minister's office said.

Abdul Rahman al-Qaradawi, an Egyptian-Turkish poet, was detained in Lebanon on Dec. 28 after returning from Syria, according to his lawyer Mohammad Sabloun and human rights group Amnesty International. His arrest followed critical comments Qaradawi made of the UAE, Saudi Arabian and Egyptian authorities in a video posted online. The UAE and Egypt have both filed requests for his extradition.

The requests "are believed to be based on the legitimate exercise of his right to freedom of expression," Amnesty International's Deputy Director for the Middle East and North Africa, Sara Hashash said in a statement, urging Lebanese authorities to reject the extradition requests. The Egyptian and Emirati foreign ministries did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Qaradawi's lawyer said he would file an urgent appeal to block his client's extradition but feared the poet might be flown out of the country before then. Sheikh Youssef al-Qaradawi, a spiritual guide to the Muslim Brotherhood who championed the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings and unsettled rulers in Egypt and the Gulf with his Islamist preaching, died in 2022.

Born in Egypt, Qaradawi spent much of his life in Qatar, where he became one of the Arab world's most influential Sunni Muslim clerics thanks to regular appearances on Qatar's Al Jazeera television network. Broadcast into millions of homes, his sermons fuelled tensions that led Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies to impose a blockade on Qatar in 2017 and declare Qaradawi a terrorist.

Biden cancels trip to Italy

WASHINGTON (AP): President Joe Biden canceled the final overseas trip of his presidency just hours before he was set to depart for Rome and the Vatican, choosing to remain in Washington to monitor the response to devastating fires raging in California.

Biden was scheduled to leave, after eulogizing former President Jimmy Carter at a memorial service in Washington, for the three-day trip to meet with Pope Francis and Italian President Sergio Mattarella and Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni as well as a final face-to-face meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

The trip was meant as a coda to the second Catholic US president's time in the White House and a final opportunity to showcase the strength of American alliances before the Democrat leaves office on Jan. 20. And the sit-down with Zelenskyy would have offered the two leaders one last chance to discuss the path ahead for Kyiv before President-elect Donald Trump takes office amid growing uncertainty about future American support for Ukraine's effort to repel Russia's invasion.

The White House had not formally announced the Biden-Zelenskyy meeting. But the two sides had agreed that the leaders would meet in Rome, according to a US official who was not authorized to comment publicly on the White House plan. The Biden administration has provided Ukraine with more than \$65 billion in military assistance since Russia invaded Ukraine nearly three years ago, including \$500 million in weaponry that the administration was expected to announce.

There is now less than \$4 billion remaining in a congressionally authorized funding for Ukraine, and much of that is expected to roll over to the Trump administration to determine whether to continue the weapons support. Trump, whose warm relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin over the years has been heavily scrutinized and who has balked at the cost of aid to Kyiv, added a new layer of doubt about future American support.

UN peacekeepers patrol in Lebanon

BEIRUT (AFP): UN peacekeepers in Lebanon patrol through rocky hills and olive groves near the border with Israel, ahead of a deadline for a truce in the war with Hezbollah that some residents fear will not hold.

The situation is "still very fragile", said Indian peacekeeper Gurpyar Sharma from the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) amid the wreckage of several destroyed buildings near the town of Marjayoun. "We are carrying out these kind of patrols" to help prevent any "further escalation of the violence", he said as AFP accompanied peacekeepers on a tour of the area.

Clothes and photographs were strewn among shattered cement blocks and other debris from the destroyed buildings, in a scene of devastation repeated across south Lebanon. A delicate truce took effect on November 27 between Israel and Hezbollah after more than a year of hostilities initiated by the Iran-backed militant group over the Gaza conflict, including two months of all-out war when Israel also sent in ground troops.

Under the ceasefire, the Lebanese army is to deploy alongside UN peacekeepers in the south as the Israeli

army withdraws over a 60-day period, which expires on January 26. Hezbollah is to withdraw its forces north of the Litani River, some 30 kilometres (20 miles) from the border, and dismantle any remaining military infrastructure in the country's south. AFP saw several small deployments of Lebanese soldiers during patrol, which traversed several areas near Marjayoun, including villages around five kilometres (three miles) from the border.

White peacekeeping vehicles rolled past civilian cars and people on foot in the crisp winter air, with some of the route overlooking the nearby town of Kham. On December 11, the Israeli army withdrew from Kham, which had seen heavy fighting and bombardment, and the Lebanese army deployed there, in the first such move under the truce deal. UNIFIL "helped the Lebanese army to confirm... that there were no Israeli troops in Kham", said Angel Saldana, a peacekeeper from Spain, noting it was a challenging operation due to the risk of unexploded ordnance. Saw a second Israeli troop withdrawal in the coastal town of Naqura, and the Lebanese army said the following day that it began

deploying to several other border areas after Israeli forces pulled out.

Saldana said local residents "are trying to go home as far as they are allowed to", noting some areas are still unsafe. Many in Lebanon are anxiously awaiting the 60-day withdrawal deadline, fearing more violence. Marjayoun resident Tamame al-Kadri, 54, who fled last year after a strike nearby, said she came back the same day as the ceasefire but does not "feel like the situation is calm". "There is no place to shelter here... we're really psychologically exhausted," she said, recalling the "terror" of months of hostilities. The Israeli army has repeatedly warned residents not to return to villages and towns in a strip of Lebanese territory along the frontier. The UN migration agency said this month that more than 120,000 people remain displaced in Lebanon, while Israeli authorities say some 51,000 people are displaced from their country's north.

Lebanese authorities have said the violence since October 2023 has killed more than 4,000 people, mostly since September last year, including some after the ceasefire, without detailing the number of combatants.

Leader sparks concern at Ghana inauguration

GHANZA (BBC): Burkina Faso's military leader Capt Ibrahim Traore sparked concern when he attended inauguration of Ghana's President John Mahama with a holstered pistol at his waist. Some have described this unusual move as a breach of security protocol.

Others have seen it as a lack of trust in the ability of Ghanaian officials to protect the Burkinabe junta chief. It is not clear if Traore had permission to carry the weapon and the new Ghanaian government has not responded to a BBC request for comment. Mahama was sworn in after beating the candidate from the then governing party, Mahamudu Bawumia, by a

large margin in last month's election. Traore, was one of 17 heads of state present, and his visit came at a time of diplomatic tension in West Africa.

Burkina Faso, along with two other military-led states - Mali and Niger, has broken away from the regional bloc Ecowas to form a new alliance. Security analyst Vladimir Antwi Danso said that it is unusual for a head of state to carry a sidearm to an inauguration ceremony as the security of the visiting leader is the responsibility of the host. He indicated that Ghanaian and Burkinabe security personnel should have discussed the issue to ensure the right

protocols were being followed. "Either that wasn't done or it was poorly done," Dr Danso told the BBC.

While another security analyst, Retd Col Festus Aboagye, agrees that the host nation is typically responsible for protecting visiting presidents, he says bilateral arrangements can lead to variations. He suggested that a consensus may have been reached to allow Traore to wear his military attire and carry his sidearm, along with some of his personal security detail. "I don't think it's a security breach in the context of how people are saying, [as] if he had taken out the weapon to shoot.

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LOS ANGELES: Smoke and flames overwhelm a commercial area engulfed by the Eaton fire in Altadena area.

Venezuela's 'colectivos' ready to pounce as opposition plans protest

CARACAS (AFP): Venezuela's "colectivos," groups of armed civilian volunteers accused of committing violence on behalf of Nicolas Maduro's pariah regime, are poised to pounce on opposition protests called for the eve of the president's swearing-in ceremony.

They have already been deployed to violently put down demonstrations that erupted after Maduro's declaration of re-election victory last July -- a claim not recognized by much of the world. And they have been busily deterring further rebellion with a well-orchestrated campaign of terror. Two days before mass demonstrations called by opposition leader Maria Corina Machado, Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello gathered several hundred members of colectivos for a televised ceremony in which he declared war on potential demonstrators.

"Fascists! Terrorists! If you dare (protest), you will regret it for the rest of your lives," Cabello pronounced to loud cheers. "We will defend the (legislative) palace, then we will go on the counter-attack," he vowed. The colectivos are pro-government paramilitaries who act in small commands that do not receive official orders, and sow terror in neighborhoods in Caracas and elsewhere. They are a legacy of Maduro's socialist predecessor, the late Hugo Chavez, and were created to work for the good of communities with sports, cultural,

educational and other social activities.

But they proudly claim they exist mainly for "security." "We work 24/7, seven days a week. No rest in defending the homeland," 55-year-old colectivo member Teodoro Cortez told AFP in the capital. In a report last September, Human Rights Watch accused the colectivos of involvement in killings, arbitrary detentions and harassment of critics following Maduro's disputed re-election. They took part in a brutal crackdown on protests with the military and police that resulted in 28 people killed, some 200 injured and more than 2,400 locked up. Colectivos "exist to keep the peace and ensure the sovereignty of Venezuela. Without them it would be more difficult," regime supporter Rafael Arevalo, 28, told AFP. Data backs up claims that in some areas where colectivos rule with an iron fist, crime is lower than elsewhere.

Such is the case in Catia, a huge working-class district in western Caracas where Damaris Mujica, 54, is one of few women to lead a colectivo. Hers has about 30 members. "If we have to be violent, of course we will," she told AFP. "If you hit me, I'll hit you back. If you want to hurt me, I won't let you," she said when asked about criticism of violence committed against the opposition. The groups are also accused of conducting night-time raids, attacking random passers-by in the street, and

stealing motorcycles. Phil Gunson of the International Crisis Group think tank told AFP that colectivo members most often go around cloaked in black and armed, their faces covered.

They exist, he said, so that "those in uniform do not have to do the dirty work... For the authorities to be able to say that the police behaved well but others acted on their accord," he said. There was evidence, Gunson added, that colectivos have direct links with the police and intelligence agencies and "are financed by the government, which gives them weapons, radios, sometimes motorcycles." They were allowed to operate with "total impunity," he said. If the goal is to instil fear, the colectivos have succeeded.

In Petare, a district of eastern Caracas where colectivo members roam free, 32-year-old Josumary Gomez told AFP their presence dissuaded her from protesting. "They have taken several people. You say to yourself: 'If I go out, I won't return,'" she told AFP in the days after the election. The colectivos are also accused of behaving like "criminal gangs" practicing extortion in some areas, according to the NGO InSight Crime, which investigates organized crime in Latin America. Cortez and Mujica deny the claims, insisting they receive no state aid and live from businesses belonging to their respective colectivos.

Conflict between Turkey, Kurdish groups rises around dam in Syria

DAMASCUS (AP): A key dam in northern Syria has become a flash point in the conflict between Kurdish forces and Turkish-backed armed groups, which has intensified in the weeks since the fall of former Syrian President Bashar Assad in a lightning offensive.

Over a thousand protesters from Kurdish areas in northeast Syria gathered at the Tishrin Dam on the Euphrates River in Aleppo province, a critical source of both water and electricity that has been at the center of clashes.

Protesters called for an end to Turkish airstrikes, which they said are damaging vital infrastructure and endangering civilian lives. Turkish drones and warplanes remained in the air during the protest, and airstrikes targeted areas near the march route, according to participants and a war monitor. The health administration in Kobani said the strikes killed five civilians and injured 15 others.

Turkey, for its part,

accused the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces of using civilians as "human shields" by encouraging them to come to the area of the fighting. A coalition of Turkish-backed groups in Syria, known as the Syrian National Army, are carrying out attacks to take control of regions near the border with Turkey that are under control of Kurdish groups. Heavy fighting has been reported in areas near the Tishrin Dam, some 90 kilometers (60 miles) east of the city of Aleppo.

"While we were walking in this march, there were about 13 or 14 airstrikes around us," said Berfin Dumar from Kobani, who joined protest. "They tried to silence our voices so we wouldn't be able to protect this dam." Farhan Haj Issa, co-chair of the executive council of the Autonomous Administration in Kobani, called for Syria's new authorities and a US-led coalition that has allied with Kurdish forces in the fight against the Islamic State to help bring about a

halt to hostilities.

"After the collapse of the Baath regime, we were supposed to enter a new phase of dialogue and laying foundations to end the crisis," he said, referring to the ruling party under Assad. "Instead, the Turkish state and its mercenaries have increased instability, added to the crisis, and turned Syria into a haven for those spreading corruption." He called on "whoever leads the government in Damascus to take responsibility and end the brutality and violence."

In a later interview, Haj Issa also addressed the US-led coalition. "We stood united with the coalition against international terrorism," he said. "Now, it's time for them to stand with us against this aggression." The new Syrian government is de facto led by the Islamist former insurgent group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, or HTS, which allied with the Turkish-backed groups in the offensive that toppled Assad. HTS leader Ahmad al-Sharaa has called for the Kurdish-led Syrian

Democratic Forces to be integrated in the national army that the new authorities in Damascus are attempting to form from a patchwork of armed factions.

The state-run Anadolu Agency quoted unnamed Turkish defence ministry officials as saying the SDF was using "innocent civilians as human shields" in the Tishrin Dam region, adding that the practice is against "international law, human rights and humanity." Turkey views the SDF as an extension of the banned Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, which is listed as a terror organization by Turkey and several other states, and has conducted several cross-border operations against the group since 2016. The SDF is, however, allied with the United States in the fight against the Islamic State group in Syria. The Turkish government has repeatedly threatened to launch a new military offensive unless the Syrian Kurdish fighters lay down arms.

Mozambique opposition leader returns from self-imposed exile

MAPUTO (AP): Mozambique's main opposition leader returned from self-imposed exile, clutching a bible and saying he still rejects the results of a disputed election last year that sparked more than two months of protests against the long-ruling party and a violent crackdown by security forces.

While Venancio Mondlane stepped off a plane, security forces fired tear gas at hundreds of his supporters who gathered near the Mavalane International Airport in the capital, Maputo, to welcome him home. Mondlane arrived to applause from airport workers and then kneeled in the arrivals hall with a bible in his left hand. "I want to fight within

this country and I will, until the very end, keep fighting for this country," Mondlane told reporters at the airport. "I'm not willing to accept election results if they are the same as those announced up until now."

He left the country in October following an election clouded by allegations of rigging against the ruling Frelimo party, which has been in power since Mozambique gained independence from Portugal in 1975. Protests erupted after Frelimo was declared the winner of the Oct. 9 election. International rights groups say more than 100 people have been killed by security forces. Some local groups put the death toll at more than 200. Mondlane had called for people to

protest the results.

Mondlane, 50, has said he left Mozambique fearing for his life after two senior members of his opposition party were killed in their car by unknown gunmen in a late-night shooting in Maputo after the election. One of the men who was killed was Mondlane's lawyer and advisor and their party called the killings political assassinations. Police also blocked roads leading to the airport after Mondlane said on social media earlier this week he would return to the southern African country. Tear gas drifted over the airport and surrounding roads and a helicopter hovered overhead. After arriving, Mondlane traveled by car to a public square in central Maputo,

with thousands of cheering supporters filling the roads and following him.

Mondlane later stood on the roof of the car to address supporters and repeated his claim that he was the rightful winner of the election. Rights groups have accused the security forces of using excessive force against post-election protesters. Authorities have said the protests were violent and needed to be subdued, but rights groups say security forces have fired live bullets at peaceful protesters, and children were among those who were killed. Mondlane, who wore a necklace of white flowers around his neck, accused authorities of kidnapping and killing some anti-government protesters.

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Social policy will be Trudeau's legacy

JUSTIN Trudeau has resigned after more than nine years as Canada's 23rd prime minister. Parliament will be prorogued and will resume sitting on March 24. Trudeau says he made his decision over the holidays after discussions with his family. During his time in office, the federal government has been extraordinarily active on social policy. From legalizing cannabis, permitting medical aid in dying, introducing dental care, pharmacare and government subsidized child care, Trudeau reimagined what Canadians can expect from their government.

The son of Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Canada's 15th prime minister, leaves office never having tasted electoral defeat. He was successful in his first run for elected office as a member of Parliament in 2008, at his run for the leadership of the Liberal Party in 2013 and in his first national election when he became prime minister in 2015. The 2015 election is one for the history books as the Liberal Party under Trudeau entered the race with just 36 seats and was widely expected to remain on the sidelines. But due in part to the "sunny ways" campaign that Trudeau ran, along with his energy and likeability, the party breezed to a massive majority with 184 seats.

Trudeau also earned worldwide praise for appointing a cabinet that was gender-balanced, a policy he continued throughout his years in office. Trudeau's Liberals were re-elected in 2019 and 2021, although both times to minority governments that required support in Parliament from the left-leaning New Democratic Party. Trudeau dealt with three American presidents, most notably with Donald Trump during the president's first term in office when the North American Free Trade Agreement was renegotiated. After Trump's re-election in November 2024, the president-elect has repeatedly mocked Trudeau, calling him governor of the 51st American state - comments that most Canadians find deeply offensive. The Covid-19 pandemic transpired during Trudeau's time in office.

As with other social policies, Trudeau's Liberals instituted a range of mandates to protect public health. Trudeau also invoked the Emergency Measures Act that allowed the federal government to exercise extraordinary powers to clear protesters that were blocking parts of Ottawa for weeks in February 2022. Trudeau's resignation comes after members of his own party lost faith during the past several months in his ability to win a fourth mandate as leader heading into the anticipated October 2025 election. But the Liberals, with or without Trudeau, face an uphill battle after nearly a decade in power. Winning a fourth consecutive term is rare in Canada.

Critics have argued Biden's efforts to hang on and his last-minute reversal contributed to the defeat of Kamala Harris and the loss of the White House to Donald Trump. During Trudeau's time in office, his marriage ended - as his own parents' marriage did decades ago while Pierre Trudeau was in power. Two of his children are teenagers, while one is a pre-teen. Trudeau has in the past remarked: "The best days of my life are the ones I've spent outside with my kids." He will now have more time with his family. Still young at age 53, Trudeau could begin a second public life as the late US president, Jimmy Carter, did following his four years in the Oval Office. Or he could largely withdraw from the public sphere and pursue a private sector career. No matter what Trudeau's future holds, he leaves an indelible mark on Canada - especially on its social policies.

Russian gas shipments

WITH temperatures dipping below freezing this week in Moldova's Russian-backed breakaway region of Transnistria, the end of an agreement to ship natural gas from Russia through Ukraine has led to rolling blackouts, idle factories and a lack of hot water. Ukraine decided not to renew a five-year gas transfer deal with Russia's state-controlled energy giant Gazprom. The agreement, which was negotiated before the February 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, allowed natural gas shipments across Ukrainian territories to countries in Europe. Before the war, Russian pipelines supplied 40% of Europe's natural gas. Now, that figure is about 8%, according to data from the European Commission.

Ukraine's energy minister, Herman Halushchenko, confirmed Kyiv had stopped the transit "in the interest of national security," according to The Associated Press. The European Commission has repeatedly emphasized that ending the transfer of Russian natural gas across Ukraine was not a surprise and that countries had time to prepare for it. But in Transnistria, a sliver of territory wedged between the Dniester River and the Ukrainian border, the end of the agreement is a serious matter. The pro-Russian separatist enclave, which fought against Moldova in 1992, declared a state of emergency over the end of the shipments. Moldova's Foreign Ministry told VOA in a statement that parts of the country west of the Dniester River - which includes most of Moldova's population and the nation's capital, Chi'inau - was preparing to stop supplies from Russia and has been buying gas on European markets, albeit at a higher price.

Moldovan authorities said they offered to help the breakaway region obtain gas from European markets. In response, Transnistria's "Foreign Ministry" claimed Moldova was attempting "to manipulate public opinion by providing false information." In a statement issued on January 6, it said: "Transnistria has not received any specific forms of assistance or adequate practical support from the Moldovan side. There is none today." Moldova's pro-Western prime minister, Dorin Recean, said that by "jeopardizing the future of the protectorate it has supported for three decades in an attempt to destabilize Moldova, Russia is demonstrating the inevitable outcome for all its allies: betrayal and isolation." "We view this as a security crisis aimed at allowing pro-Russian forces to return to power in Moldova and use our territory as a weapon against Ukraine, with which we share a 1,200-kilometer border," Recean said. "The Moldovan government remains committed to supporting all citizens with simple solutions for those in the Transnistrian region. Alternative energy solutions such as biomass systems, generators, humanitarian aid and basic medical supplies are ready to be delivered if the separatist leadership accepts support," he added. Oazu Nantoi, a member of the Moldovan parliament, said he also believes that Transnistria is refusing help from official Moldovan authorities on the Kremlin's orders. Nantoi told VOA that most of Moldova is supplied until March. "There, we are no longer dependent on Gazprom's monopoly. We can buy gas at market prices," he said. "Sometimes these prices bite, but Gazprom cannot influence consumption."

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Trump isn't the president of Canada

Stewart Prest

UNITED States President-elect Donald Trump has reiterated his apparent desire to make Canada a 51st American state, sharing a recent social media post about Canadian entrepreneur Kevin O'Leary's support of the idea. Trump was roundly mocked for his latest trolling of Canada, but his apparent fixation is dangerous at a time when the country's Liberal government, long weakened, is in disarray following the shock resignation of Chrystia Freeland as finance minister and deputy prime minister. In fact, in her December resignation letter, Freeland placed the country's response to Trump at the heart of her critique of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

Among the many broadsides delivered to her former boss, the fact that Canada is ill-prepared to face the dire new threat of Trump's second term was a recurring theme. Trump wasted no time inserting himself into Canada's internal affairs, calling Freeland "toxic" and continuing his running gag of referring to Trump as the governor of an American state rather than the leader of a sovereign nation. The attacks are becoming routine, with Trump suggesting in another post that Canadians would "save massively on taxes and military protection" as the 51st state. Whoever becomes prime minister in the weeks or months to come will have to figure out how to deal with Trump and the existential threat he poses to Canada in a much more effective manner than the Liberals have under Trudeau. Trump is flagrantly disrespecting Canadian independence and, along with it, Canadian identity. He's openly challenging the very idea of Canadian sovereignty.

Canada must respond accordingly. It can be hard to fully understand the nature and the extent of threats posed by someone so willing to flout respected political and diplomatic conventions. His annexation threats create a constant set of multifaceted challenges to Canada's economic prosperity, democratic norms and sovereignty. The economic dimension of his threat to Canada is now well-known. Trump's proposed 25 per cent tariffs on all Canadian exports to the US are going to be incredibly costly to both countries, given the integration of their economies. But given the size disparity between the two countries, the impact will be bigger in Canada.

The democratic threat is also clear. Trump has shown he regards democracy not as a crucial set of rules and norms, but as a set of obstacles to overcome. He's unable to admit defeat or even graciously accept victory.

His revenge tour has begun, with lawsuits against media outlets and even against a pollster whose data suggested Democrat Kamala Harris was pulling ahead during the late days of the US election campaign. Once back in the White House, Trump has promised to use public institutions to punish opponents. A partisan US Supreme Court decision last year ensures that even if his own actions are criminal, he will remain immune from prosecution. Trump's disrespect of democratic institutions is corrosive and contagious. During his first term, experts sounded alarm bells about how he was linked to democratic decline around the world.

If the US president can openly challenge democratic norms, after all, what's to stop other would-be demagogues from doing the same? A second Trump administration is likely to continue such trends, and his willingness to intervene in Canadian politics is already causing shock waves north of the border. Trump's actions have repeatedly suggested he has no respect for those he views as powerless and right now Canada fits the bill. He's made it a running

joke that Canada is not a real country, but just another American state. Nervously laughing off this threat doesn't cut it as a response. Canada has so far acted in a manner that makes it seem as though Trump has a point.

Rather than pushing back by defending Canada's strong record in managing its part of the border relationship, the government immediately promised more than \$1 billion in new border spending. Canada's leaders have failed to call out Trump's threats as the bluster of a bully. In the face of Trump's tariff threats, Trudeau made a surprise trip to Florida to pay his respects to the president-elect and plead Canada's case, rather than observing the normal protocol and waiting for a formal postinauguration state visit.

This made Trudeau appear more like a supplicant than a visiting head of government. It's helpful in this situation to think of Trump as a schoolyard bully demanding someone else do his homework - in this case, defend America's borders. Such bullying doesn't end when you give in to the bully, but only when it becomes clear you won't.

Border protection is a core function of any state, and a responsibility of any American president. Trump's demand that others do it for him is both a sign of weakness and an attempt to create a scapegoat should his efforts fail. As with any bully, if you promise to do the work for him, you'll just encourage additional torment. So when Trudeau promised to do more in exchange for an end to the bullying, he got a kick in the pants for his efforts as Trump began to taunt him about being the governor of the 51st American state. The world is watching how Canada responds to the bully.

If Canada hopes to enjoy the respect of its peers, it must show a willingness to fight for itself, its prosperity and its values. It must defend its sovereignty from

those who refuse to respect it, and act assertively to maintain Canadian prosperity. That could mean a trade war. For more than a century, Canada and the US have found ways to cooperate and prosper side by side despite the fact that the US is a much more powerful nation. They've built alliances and agreements founded on shared norms, values and customs as part of a deep and multifaceted relationship. None of that history seems to matter to Trump, and now American power seemingly matters more than Canadian sovereignty.

This power imbalance is all the more acute given Canada's dependence on the American economy and American military might. But Canada is not powerless. Dependency works both ways, and the deep integration of the two countries' economies makes the US vulnerable as well. Shutting off power exports, as Ontario Premier Doug Ford suggests, is one course of action that would have an immediate and significant detrimental effect on the American economy. Ditto for petroleum. Energy is power in more ways than one.

The US consumes millions of barrels of Canadian petroleum every day, and a tax on that fuel would be inflationary and ultimately unpopular with American voters. Other countries stand to lose if the US gets away with disrespecting Canadian sovereignty as well. If Trump refuses to respect Canadian sovereignty, no country is safe.

Panama and Denmark can already attest to that. Finding ways to creatively push back against such demands should be an imperative for any country that values its independence, and Canada needs to work with such allies. Trump will soon be US president again. But he is not and should not be treated as the president of Canada. Whoever leads Canada in the months to come has tools at their disposal to defend Canadian sovereignty, and they must be prepared to use them.

Democrats must work with Trump - strategically

Max Burns

SINCE election night two months ago, Democrats on Capitol Hill have been quietly wrestling with a question that will define the next four years of their political world. With anti-Trump resistance politics in ruins and large portions of the Democratic coalition shifting right, to what extent should Democrats work with a MAGA movement they've spent years denouncing as dangerous?

The question of how and whether to align with Donald Trump on policy has divided the party and even split the progressive movement. Lefty Rep. Ro Khanna's (D-Calif.) call for bipartisan engagement with Elon Musk's government efficiency group led to an outpouring of venom from progressives, for whom Musk is a special kind of poison. Others, including strategist David Axelrod, reject out of hand the idea that Trump would even consider working with Democrats. If Democrats want to win back the voters who abandoned them in November, they'll need to learn to take wins where they can in a government dominated by an ideology they find repulsive. That might turn some stomachs, but politics is the art of making the best of a bad situation. Even in the darkness of Trumpism, Democrats have a real opportunity to deliver real positive change for their constituents. They should. Though Khanna is too idealistic about Musk's actual intentions for DOGE, he's right about how important it is that Democrats avoid becoming another "Party of No." Democrats may find President-elect Trump's tall tale populism disgraceful, but most voters support his tough talk around immigration, high prices and American global competitiveness. Ignoring that reality landed Democrats in the ditch in 2024, and they can hardly afford a repeat of that showing in two years.

There are also clear areas of weakness that Democrats can exploit. Voters remain skeptical of Trump's price-hiking tariff threats, and they disagree with his sympathetic views toward the world's autocrats. Those disagreements are especially visible among young voters who shifted to Trump in November. But first Democrats will need to get voters listening again - and the way to do that is by undermining Republicans' message that the Democratic Party is solely out to obstruct Trump's second-term agenda. The roadmap is there. Trump's broad-strokes approach means he'll need Congress to flesh out the details of how they achieve his lofty (and often conflicting) goals. That's a wider playing field than Democrats think, and engaging the process to make bad bills better doesn't weaken the party's legitimate criticisms of Trump's squishy platform. But unlike when Republicans enjoyed the

leverage of divided government, Democrats find themselves with few levers to pull in order to meaningfully delay the legislative process. So where can Democrats find those wins? Of all places, immigration reform. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) has already opened negotiations with Republicans on pairing increased funding for border enforcement with a deal to provide legal status to Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients, popularly known as DREAMers. Trump's own position is hazy. Though the incoming president said as recently as last month that he supports DREAMers, he's yet to outline any clear policy mechanisms for his expected immigration package. Democrats may balk at helping Trump enact immigration policies they've long opposed, but cutting a deal will help mend Democrats' tattered public image on immigration while also securing a long-sought resolution for migrants brought to this country as children.

Acknowledging their unpopularity on immigration will also help Democrats reopen conversations with the immigrant communities that supported Trump in November. That voter bloc was a long-time Democratic stalwart before its big shift in 2024, but divisions over immigration policy have been sapping immigrant support for Democrats for years. Those voters tell pollsters they don't feel fully represented by either political party. They support the DREAMers but align with the GOP on policing the border. These are voters Democrats can win back, but it will require a willingness to bend. Democrats also share an unlikely commonality with MAGA's populist base: Both groups believe in taxing the ultra-rich. "We have to increase taxes on the wealthy," Trump ally Steve Bannon reiterated last month on his show "War Room." Many working-class MAGA voters feel the same, and for all its faults, Trump's movement has been built in large part on actually listening to his own base. It may seem strange that a president-elect who is permanently shadowed by mega-billionaire Elon Musk would be open to raising taxes on his wealthy donors, but we live in interesting times. Trump's transactional approach to politics means that there are no such things as permanent alliances - even between Republicans and the ultra-rich.

If Trump sees raising taxes on the wealthy as the way to win other victories he cares more immediately about, Democrats must be willing to seriously engage the president-elect's fickleness. If they don't, the left will find itself left behind by events as Republicans spend the next two to four years legislating their vision for America.

Doing the math on Russia's territorial gains in Ukraine

Alexander J. Motyl

RESIDENTS of Kyiv are panicking! At the rate that Vladimir Putin's unstoppable military juggernaut is capturing Ukrainian territory, their city will fall into Russian hands in only 92 years. Just in time to celebrate the Russian dictator's 165th birthday! Although this paragraph may strike one as silly, that's because it's a reduction ad absurdum, a reduction to the absurd of a particular narrative favored by the Kremlin and its fellow travelers in the West.

According to this view, Russia's mighty armed forces are seizing huge swaths of Ukrainian territory, while the poor Ukrainians, though outgunned and outmanned, are desperately, even heroically, resisting - but to no avail. The Russians will keep on coming until they overrun Ukraine.

Therefore, Ukraine and its allies should agree to any

kind of peace deal today, because the future can only get worse. This narrative is just that - an opinion with little grounding in actual facts. The amazing thing about it is not that the Kremlin promotes it, but that many Western analysts continue to adhere to it. They should know better, if only because all it takes to see that this narrative is silly is a rudimentary knowledge of arithmetic.

According to one Ukrainian analyst's estimate, Russia captured 2,600 square kilometers of Ukrainian territory in 2024. (The US-based Institute for the Study of War places the number at 4,168.) Ukraine's left bank - the area east of the Dniro River - constitutes 240,000 square kilometers. Assume that all of Kyiv is on the left bank and then divide 240,000 by 2,600 to get 92, the number of years it would take for Russia to capture left-bank Ukraine at its current rate.

(Alternatively, divide 240,000 by 4,168 to get 58 years.) So, yes, Russia is making incremental advances, but no, those gains don't amount to a blitzkrieg. Contrast these numbers with the widespread images of Russia as an invincible war machine and conclude that something must be amiss with this narrative.

But the facts are even more depressing for the Putin gang. In 2024 alone, Russia suffered 427,000 casualties, including dead and wounded. Divide that number by 2,600 - the amount of Ukrainian territory captured by Russia in 2024 - and you get 164, the number of Russian casualties per captured square kilometer. Multiply 164 by 240,000, Ukraine's territory east of the Dniro, and you get 39 million - the number of soldiers Russia would lose in 92 years of projected

fighting. (The same operations using Institute for the Study of War estimates equals 25 million casualties.) Even Putin would conclude that these numbers might put a damper on his birthday festivities.

Imagine that the US invades Mexico, captures a few provinces in its initial advance, loses about half of the initially captured territory, and then suffers 427,000 casualties in just one year while making micro-advances. No American would call that a success, while all Mexicans would be rejoicing for having stopped Yankee imperialism. Naturally, this analysis is incomplete. Ukraine has also lost thousands of soldiers and civilians; its cities and infrastructure have been devastated; and Russia continues to occupy about one-fifth of its territory. But here, too, given Russia's advantages in virtually

everything, these losses translate into either a draw or a modest victory for Kyiv. It follows that Ukraine and its allies should not agree to any kind of peace deal today, because the future can only get worse for Russia. Why, then, do Western analysts continue to believe in the Kremlin's narrative and repeat such self-evident nonsense? Some are simply Moscow's fellow travelers - Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban and Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico come to mind. They feign concern for Ukraine's suffering, but, like the Freedom Party of Austria, the Alternative for Germany and some MAGA Republicans, they are Putin's ideological and political allies. Unfortunately, Elon Musk, who does know how to do arithmetic, falls into this camp as well.

Others, like some neo-realist scholars, are wedded to their assumptions and theories, regardless of the

facts. Having built their careers on those ideas, they believe they can't abandon them without losing face. That's a natural impulse among all academics, even though there's nothing like a well-timed mea culpa to reinforce one's reputation as a wise seer who has the guts to admit to being wrong.

Still others, perhaps the majority, are soft on the Kremlin and its narrative simply because the Biden administration, which they hate, pursued a hard-ish line toward Putin. Since the enemy of my enemy must be my friend, they objectively side with Russia, even as it violates everything they claim to stand for. The bad news is that even people with the intellectual wherewithal to see through Putin's propaganda can embrace it. The good news is that numbers don't lie and that facts usually get the upper hand over half-baked narratives - perhaps not immediately, but eventually.

Starmmer is about to get a taste of his own bitter medicine

K EIR Starmer is in terrible trouble. Desperately unpopular at home, he is losing his friends abroad. Almost the last socialist standing in a world shifting Right-wards at breakneck speed, our accidental Prime Minister cuts an isolated, befuddled, almost pitiful figure. His Leftist comrades Joe Biden, Justin Trudeau and Olaf Scholz are on the way out; Emmanuel Macron is a laughing stock.

The future belongs to Donald Trump, Canada's Pierre Poillievre, Argentina's Javier Milei and even Nayib Bukele, El Salvador's crime-busting, pro-Bitcoin president, and to the Eurosceptic, anti-immigration parties rising across Europe. All look at Britain with a mix of sadness and incomprehension. To the Right-wing counter-elites seizing power worldwide, Starmer embodies our accelerating decline, his values at odds with the global mood, the inadequacies of his Government painfully obvious. We are the country nobody wants to copy, a case study in what not to do, the subject of a cruel experiment in destroying a successful and cohesive society.

Like a dinosaur who miraculously escaped the mass extinction of his companions, Starmer plods on, unable to recalibrate to the new zeitgeist, chasing an EU mirage that no longer exists, stubbornly hiking tax and spend, doubling down on mass immigration and overpriced energy, oblivious to the flashing red lights in the City as gilt yields rocket to their highest levels since 1998.

The Prime Minister was caught by surprise by the verbal onslaught unleashed by Elon Musk over the grooming gangs abomination, but that is nothing compared to what

will happen when Trump takes office on 20 January. Starmer's inflexibility means the special relationship is unlikely to survive: its demise, catastrophic for UK interests, would serve as the epitaph of his failed premiership. Trump sees the UK and European countries as whingeing, ungrateful scroungers. He will demand much greater defence spending, but Rachel Reeves, facing a renewed fiscal crisis as our borrowing costs surge, won't want to slash welfare and is unlikely to deliver more than a token increase. Trump will react furiously.

If that doesn't break the special relationship, the administration's likely embrace of lawfare will stun a Westminster establishment that doesn't understand the modern Republican Party. Starmer, a Left-wing lawyer, is about to be given a taste of his own medicine. Even though Israel possesses its own independent courts and its own robust democracy to deal with law-breaking or abuses, and despite the fact that the Jewish state is meant to be our ally, Starmer imposed sanctions against a handful of Israeli settlers accused of attacking Palestinians. Biden approved similar sanctions.

The Left cheered at this embrace of extra-territoriality and disregard for national sovereignty, but, in its arrogant belief that the wokerati would always be in power, failed to grasp the threat to its own interests of setting such a precedent. The Maga Right has none of the inhibitions of its predecessors. It is planning to leverage the power of a recaptured state to annihilate its enemies. Many US conservatives are now calling, in all seriousness, for sanctions to be

Allister Heath

imposed on British politicians deemed to have not done enough to combat the obscenity that are the grooming gangs. Some want UK citizens convicted of raping young girls but released after short sentences to be directly penalised by the US.

Britain risks being treated like a country with a broken justice system by a global super-power: it is a farce and an embarrassment. Foreign intervention on a domestic matter, even if spearheaded by well-meaning conservatives, isn't the solution: the answer is a better UK government committed to delivering justice to the victims. Our morally bankrupt bien-pensant elite is triply to blame. There is an even stronger campaign underway to impose sanctions on British officials who restricted arms sales for Israel, for tacitly helping enemies of America. The International Criminal Court is certain to be targeted: its chief prosecutor Karim Ahmad Khan is British. There may be extradition requests, as well as attempts to go after Labour for allowing activists to campaign for Kamala Harris. The "human rights" house of cards could be toppled, destroying the centre-piece of the Starmerite worldview.

More generally, America is about to start exporting Right-wing values again, putting it at odds with Labour's Britain. US foreign policy has long been profoundly ideological, though the belief system has varied: America backed our membership of the European Community (bad), supported anti-communism (good), fought Islamism after 9/11 (good), and became a massive exporter of woke and environmental nostrums, working with Wall Street

and Silicon Valley (bad). The British Left embraced this latter onslaught: it welcomed donations to the pro-EU camp from US banks. Starmer took the knee in 2020, defying Trump and aligning himself with the far-Left, US BLM movement. British firms adopted deranged teachings of US-centric critical race theory. All of this is now being reversed. We are living through the greatest "vibe shift" to the Right since 1979-1980, confirming, as per Newton's Third Law of Motion, that "for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction".

Far from promoting DEI, the US will combat it. Trump wants to crack and ditch green targets and treaties. Musk wants to reinvent himself as a Right-wing George Soros, funding Right-wing causes globally, terrifying the British Left. Scores of corporate giants are ending DEI. Numerous Wall Street banks have pulled out of net zero initiatives. Meta - which owns Facebook and Instagram - has reembraced free speech, parting company with Nick Clegg and aligning itself with Musk's X. Exporting the First Amendment may become a US foreign policy priority. We can expect trade sanctions against UK and EU interests if Starmer or Brussels seek to prevent American social media firms from hosting material that is legal in the US. Britain and Europe will face a new kind of conservative US imperialism, manifesting itself not just in attempted land grabs (such as reversing the surrender of the Chagos, or trying to absorb Greenland) but by tying trade sanctions to politics and policy. Everything is about to change. Starmer doesn't stand a chance.

The Telegraph

Has Bangladesh’s revolution been a success?

THE 6 August marked a new beginning for more than 170 million people in Bangladesh, as the authoritarian government of prime minister Sheikh Hasina was finally toppled after weeks of bloody protests that saw hundreds killed.

The protests began as a student movement against plans to reform recruitment for public sector jobs, but quickly snowballed into a popular revolution against the Awami League government. Hasina fled to India on a helicopter as an angry mob marched towards the presidential palace. Her ousting created a power vacuum in Bangladesh that was quickly filled by a new caretaker government, as Hasina critic and Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus returned to the country to be named interim leader. The 84-year-old microfinance pioneer faced an almighty task - restoring democracy to a nation scarred by violence and whose economy was floundering.

Almost five months on and the streets of Dhaka have come alive, schools and colleges have reopened, a police force which refused to work in the days immediately after Hasina's ouster has returned, and remittances from abroad - worth around 5 per cent of GDP - have stabilised. But Bangladesh is still on edge, with growing discontent over the Yunus government's failure to solve the economic crisis and international concern over attacks on religious minority groups. The UK government this month revised its travel guidance, cautioning that "terrorists are likely to try to carry out attacks" in Bangladesh as it advised citizens against "all but essential travel". For better or worse, Hasina's ouster was necessary, says Rafiqul Islam, a 19-year-old Dhaka University student who was one of the thousands who took part in demonstrations that led to her downfall. He and others braved confrontations with a police force

ordered to shoot at protesters to quash the unrest.

It was the rising death toll among students, and the security forces' eventual refusal to carry out those orders, that made it clear Hasina could not continue. The Yunus administration revealed in November that about 1,500 people died in protests and as many as 3,500 may have been forcibly abducted during Hasina's rule. Islam says he has more faith in the interim government to turn the country's fortunes around than the 15-year Hasina regime capable of such brutality, but admits he is disappointed at the Yunus administration's handling of the economy and the rising tensions with neighbour India, a strong ally that played a pivotal role in Bangladesh's liberation in 1971. "We knew it would not be a miraculous change of situation in Bangladesh but it is not getting any better," he tells The Independent. "We need an elected government."

Islam is pointing to the fact that the Yunus administration has no legal grounds for existing - Hasina amended the constitution in 2011 to remove a provision for interim governments. It is an irregularity backed by the army and the people's faith, Islam says, and once that initial optimism fades the country could again plunge into chaos. Sehnaz Khan, a resident of Chittagong city, which has witnessed a spate of clashes between religious groups in recent weeks, hopes the sacrifice of hundreds of protesters will not be in vain. She is excited for the future but says soaring food prices and rampant electricity cuts have added another worry for her family of four, who survive on her income. "If [we don't get] a better life, we want our old lives to be returned to us," the primary school teacher says. "I used to be able to feed my entire family three meals a day. Given the cost of rice and other necessities, we barely make it to two meals."

Alisha Rahaman Sarkar

Bangladesh's foreign exchange reserves fell by \$1.23bn to \$18.61bn by the end of November this year, according to the central bank. The country recorded the highest inflation in four months in November at 11.38 per cent, driven mainly by higher food prices, the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics found. Hailed as the fastest-growing economy in South Asia in recent years, Bangladesh's development success story was called into question after a white paper concluded that the Hasina administration massaged GDP figures. Researchers put GDP growth at around 3 per cent in 2018-2019, compared to the 7 per cent claimed in official statistics. Beyond economic troubles, critics say Yunus has failed to set out a timeline for holding new elections and not done enough to protect either religious minorities in the Muslim-majority nation, or members of the Awami League.

The targeted violence has driven hundreds of Bangladeshi minorities and members of the former ruling party out of the country, with many of them taking refuge in India. The authorities say there have been 88 cases of violence against minorities in the five months since Hasina's ousting, though they have received widespread coverage, particularly in neighbouring India. Yunus has described this as "exaggerated propaganda" from a country whose government had closely backed Hasina for many years. "The transitional government certainly could have done more in the days and weeks after Ms Hasina's ouster to establish order and provide security for Hindu communities. The violence that we have seen hardly came as a surprise," Dr Ian Hall, professor at Brisbane's Griffith University, tells The Independent.

Political parties including the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) led by former prime minister Khaleda Zia have been pressing

the interim government for a clear plan to hold a national election. Army chief General Waker-uz-Zaman in September told Reuters that democracy should be restored within a year to a year-and-a-half, but urged patience. Yunus this month insisted that polls can be held only after electoral reforms are put in place. He suggested elections could be arranged in the first half of 2026.

Yunus has said "the past is gone", but he has also responded to public anger against Hasina by cancelling national holidays honouring her father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, one of the nation's founding leaders. Last month his portrait was removed from the Bangladesh president's office, and new currency notes have been issued with his likeness removed. Some Bangladeshis say there has been too much focus on righting past wrongs. "These are misplaced priorities," says Raju Poddar, a clothing shop owner in Dhaka. "No one wants to remember the brutal past but the government needs to focus on making the present peaceful. The never-ending protests, the attacks need to stop."

The success of Bangladesh's revolution and the Yunus government that has followed will be judged first and foremost on whether lives for ordinary Bangladeshis get better - but there are still calls for accountability for a regime that systematically repressed opposing voices over 15 years. Another point of contention with India is the Yunus government's formal calls for Hasina to be extradited back to Bangladesh to face trial for alleged crimes against humanity committed during the protests. India has confirmed it received the request but refused to comment further. "Yunus has been quite measured with New Delhi," Dr Hall says. "It is time for New Delhi to reevaluate its tendency to take sides in the domestic politics of its neighbours."

The Independent

Four cases to test Trump’s antitrust strategy

PRESIDENT-ELECT Trump's antitrust team of enforcers has now been named. There are few clues about their likely course of enforcement based solely on their resumes, all of which include bipartisan elements. Current FTC Commissioner Andrew Ferguson will replace Lina Khan as chair of the FTC.

Ferguson was Republican Senate Leader Mitch McConnell's principal legal advisor but was put on the FTC by President Biden. The current head of the Antitrust Division at the Department of Justice, Jonathan Kanter, will be replaced by Gail Slater, a former advisor to Vice President-elect JD Vance and staff member of the National Economic Council in President Trump's first term.

Slater also served as an advisor to Julie Brill, a Democratic member of the FTC appointed by President Obama. If these individuals' resumes do not point to a change in antitrust direction, however, historic precedent does. Twenty-four years ago, the George W. Bush administration inherited from the Clinton administration the last major case against big tech: US v. Microsoft. The Bush team was alarmed by the harm to America's high-tech competitiveness that would have followed from the Clinton team's request to break up Microsoft. Shortly after taking over, the Bush antitrust authorities withdrew the break-up demand, proposed conduct restrictions instead, and allowed

Microsoft to continue to innovate as an integrated company. A similar change in approach may come in four cases supported by the Biden administration which target some of the nation's most innovative and consumer focused companies: Google, Amazon, Apple and Meta (Facebook). The first is the Biden Justice Department's case claiming that Google monopolized the market for online search. It won at trial and has now asked the court to break up Google as a remedy - strikingly parallel to Clinton's request to break up Microsoft 24 years earlier. This case had actually been brought in October 2020, in the waning weeks of the first Trump administration.

Trump's then-antitrust chief had disqualified himself from considering the case, and with other matters taking priority at the White House, it was hardly a flagship of the first Trump administration. Further, although Trump's team brought the case, it was Biden's team, four years later, that demanded the break-up of Google as a remedy. Second, the Biden Justice Department sued Apple, claiming it had impeded interoperability between Apple's iPhone apps and other smart phone systems. That case is in the pre-trial stage. The Justice Department wants to order Apple to make its most valuable applications universally available, even to competitors. Once again, there is an obvi-

Tom Campbell

ous parallel to the Microsoft case, where, if Clinton's Justice Department had had its way, the newly spun-off Windows' app company would have made all its Windows' apps available to Microsoft's competitors.

The third case is the Biden FTC's lawsuit against Amazon for requiring retailers to offer the lowest prices available anywhere if they sell on Amazon; and requiring retailers to use Amazon's delivery and return services if they want favorable placement on Amazon's website.

In opposing the latter practice, the Biden team ignored how different parts of a single big tech company worked together to guarantee a better experience for the consumer. The fourth case is the FTC's lawsuit against Meta over Facebook's acquisition of Instagram and What's App. This was originally brought on a 3-to-2 vote of the FTC in 2020, with two of President Trump's three appointees to the FTC at that time voting no.

This happened eight and six years, respectively, after each acquisition had been approved by federal antitrust authorities. Not feeling any real ownership of these cases, the new Trump antitrust team can abstract from the minutiae of each case and apply some broader principles. For the first three, the applicable rule Trump's team might follow is that government should generally not inter-

fere with business success where consumers seem satisfied. Google offers the best search engine in the world, and the trial record is conspicuously devoid of consumer complaints. Apple has defended its interoperability rules as necessary to preserve the high quality of performance of the iPhone it created.

Amazon requires its own delivery services to assure the reliability that has become synonymous with its brand. Consumer satisfaction is in the stratosphere. In these three cases, however, the Biden administration followed a different standard, ignoring the genius of American innovation and the supremacy of the consumer. In the Biden era, any tech company big enough can be attacked for any practice that disadvantaged a competitor - even if consumers prefer the practice. The FTC's case against Facebook (Meta) for acquiring Instagram and What's App, however, will attract critical review by the Trump antitrust team for a different reason.

The decision to challenge the mergers anew after they had been cleared years earlier signaled that corporate America can not rely on federal antitrust authorities. No acquisition could ever be considered final. The Biden antitrust team may not have minded what that approach meant for long-term corporate planning, but Trump's antitrust team cannot conclude that this is an efficient way for the government to interact with American industry.

It’s obvious why Trump actually wants Greenland

PRESIDENT-ELECT Donald Trump wants to acquire Greenland. This is not merely one of his japes, as it may have been during his first term. Great-power territorial acquisition is on his dream list for his second term. And while the annexation of Canada as the "51st state," as he often posts, may be more in the messing-around category, he's speaking quite seriously about seizing Greenland. The Danish crown is paying attention.

"In meetings, at dinners and in passing conversations, Mr. Trump has asked advisers whether the US can acquire Greenland, listened with interest when they discuss its abundant resources and geopolitical importance," the Wall Street Journal first reported in 2019. It seemed, as with so many things during his first term, that it was something staff promised to "look into" while assuming that Trump would forget and move on to something else.

Trump, however, has not forgotten, and he will spend much more of his second term trying to execute his most fanciful plans than his first. In Trump's announcement of his nominee to serve as ambassador to Denmark, Ken Howery, he emphasized that "for purposes of National Security and Freedom throughout the World, the United States of America feels that the ownership and control of Greenland is an absolute necessity." Kenny, you have your orders.

Greenland, with a population of around 50,000, is an autonomous territory of Denmark, a kingdom with which Greenland has a history going back more than a millennium. Greenland manages its internal affairs, while national security is delegated to Denmark. While Greenland isn't particularly enraptured with Denmark anymore, that doesn't mean it's ready to

Jim Newell

leap into the hands of America. Greenland's prime minister, in response to Trump's latest chatter about acquisition, has emphasized that the island is not for sale. Denmark, meanwhile, is getting saucy in the face of Trump's expansionist threats. King Frederik, who took the throne from his mom a year ago, just released an updated royal coat of arms-and hoo boy.

The updated one more prominently displays symbols of the Danish realm's overseas territories, portraying a significantly larger polar bear, representing Greenland, and ram, representing the Faroe Islands. A more realistic updated coat of arms would feature the logo of Novo Nordisk. But as the king wishes, so the royal drawers-of-pictures obey.

Trump saw King Frederik's upsized polar bear and raised him a Don Jr. Greenland excursion. The president-elect's son landed in Nuuk on Tuesday, in the Trump-branded plane, on an unofficial trip. The purpose, per the AP, was "to shoot video content for podcasting," in line with the industry trend of people watching videos of audio shows. While in Nuuk, Don Jr.'s father called in to speak to an assembled group. During a press conference on Tuesday, meanwhile, Trump laid out his vision for acquiring Greenland.

He threatened "very high tariffs" on Denmark if it refused to consider selling Greenland and refused to rule out economic or military coercion in his effort to take over Greenland. (He refused to rule out the same for his other pet project, retaking the Panama Canal.) He also suggested that Denmark might not really have control over Greenland, anyway.

It's important to note that Trump is not the first

American official to come up with the idea of annexing Greenland, and he is correct that the island is of significant strategic importance. With the Arctic melting-who knows why!-new sea lanes are opening, and Russia and China have been working to plant their flags. The island has vast natural resources, including valuable rare-earth mineral deposits. And were Greenland to achieve full independence, it would inevitably fall under some great power's security umbrella.

The US already has a military base on the island, as it is. None of this means, however, that the US needs to annex Greenland to strategic purposes. It could simply negotiate a treaty or some other diplomatic agreement for enhanced cooperation. That may be what Trump's saber-rattling, in the end, is all about. More likely, though, he just wants it because it would be cool. And as much as he makes the national security arguments ... well, we've all studied this guy's brain for a decade now. We think we know why he's really interested in it. It's because Greenland looks really, really big on the Mercator projection.

Greenland is not small. We would never disrespect Greenland by calling it small. But it's not as big as it looks, flattened out, on the Mercator projection. It is not roughly the same size as Africa. It is my belief, however, that Trump does not know this and believes that it is the size of Africa, which makes him fixated on it enough to threaten war-dare war or shooting war-with a NATO ally over its control.

The same applies to Canada, which Trump also says he wants, and which also appears enormous on the Mercator projection. Trump has not indicated what his plans for governance would be of any of the territories he hopes to capture.

Lebanese must seize this opportunity for change

MY first op-ed of last year was titled "Change in Syria could be the region's black swan event of 2024." The year ended with this change happening and Bashar Assad being removed from power. My conclusion to that article of 12 months ago was that such an event "could change the face of the Middle East in a manner unseen since the time of decolonization and independence."

There has indeed been a realignment of interests in the Middle East that might bring surprises and new alliances. Syria's historical central role in the region will bring this forward. It is also a new page for Lebanon. During recent years, it has been very clear that the Lebanese file had been put aside while Syria was in turmoil. As various forces were battling on the ground in Syria toward an unknown outcome, Lebanon was not worth the investment. There was no point, beyond some international diplomatic patch-ups, in a strong commitment to Lebanon before Damascus became stable again. Lebanon was secondary.

Damascus is now on this new path. In short, Tehran will no longer be able to use Syria to extend its influence both militarily and politically to Lebanon and beyond. This is what the Assad regime had bargained with Iran since the early 1980s, by being its logistical Arabic extension. But today's change comes with a new balance of power and influence. It still has a tough road ahead with its domestic issues and a new regional role to be determined.

We can nevertheless rightly start to ask how this will impact Lebanon. How will Beirut live through this change? Will it bring forward true change or will it be more of the same under a new banner? The answers will not only come from

Khaled Abou Zahr

geopolitical deal-making, but they are also clearly in the hands of the Lebanese.

The early signs are not encouraging. With losses and wins, the Lebanese old guard of politicians are ready to reboot their political leverage through the road they know best, Damascus. Obviously, Hezbollah is on the defensive and cornered politically and militarily. It has a diminished, nonrenewable stock of weapons after being hit severely by Israel. Yet, it will not be an easy way forward. It is time for a real and complete change, which today can only be brought forward with a new federal system. Most pundits loyal to the old guard (from all sides) have described federalism as the beginning of a new civil war or a plan for secession. It is, in reality, the opposite and one of the best options for keeping Lebanon united and safe. There is no better way to bring stability than by giving each community more freedom in what matters to them.

We need to reduce fear and mitigate greed. And federalism is the best way to achieve both. Fear and greed are what puts everything at risk. It is time to choose a political system that cancels both. Federalism, by giving power to each community, would break Lebanon free of this old dynamic.

Nothing on the ground must be left to threaten communities, so the surrender of Hezbollah's arsenal should be a necessity.

This is the only way to give the initial green light for the respect of the single most important institution today, the Lebanese Armed Forces. It urgently needs to assume its true role for the sake of the country. Subsequently, there is an urgent need to establish strong stability without dismantling existing institutions, despite their weaknesses, while simultaneously pursuing a

complete overhaul. We now know that history never ends. And in the Middle East, reversals can happen and what has been done can be undone, especially in volatile situations.

This also applies to Syria. While leaving the Syrian people to decide their own future, it is high time to delink and de-risk both files. We now need to choose Lebanon and avoid inviting too much influence from Syria. We need positive and peaceful bilateral relations. However, we do not want the political fate of the country to be the result of a balancing act between regional influences.

I do not wish to be aligned with a politician just because we are from the same group. I want to align with a politician who brings a true vision for the country and is capable of executing it. By putting greed and fear aside, we give a new generation a chance to see this type of leadership, not simply a geopolitical balancing act that brings forward the good deal-maker versus the solid country-builder. What we fail to understand is that change in the Levant is often out of the box; different from what analysts were expecting. Lebanon, because of its constant turmoil, seems adapted to this change.

Yet, as we can all notice the beginnings of a new battle for extreme transformation, I do not know which way it will go. But I am certain that, short of a new political pact built on a new system such as federalism, the risks of slipping into even more chaos, such as the ones that we witnessed in the times of "decolonization and independence," are real. I nevertheless know that, to avoid the cycles of assassinations or worse that this phase could bring, the Lebanese people need to stick together across all religions and put forward a viable political solution before one is imposed on them.

انتقال پر مدلل

حرمِ ذیہارثنت کے اے ذی آنی کی نعیم کپیوٹر
آپریشن کلیم اور ذرائع نعیم کے بھائی انجینئر
عطا اللہ وفات پاچکا ہے جنکی نماز گزار و مکرزہ شریف
روز سومرہ 11.01.2025 بہادر کھلے رنگ
روڈ پشاور میں اور گدی کنی۔ جبکہ انکی رمل قریب
بروز میرا کار پاش گاہیں اور اکی جاگیں۔

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In brief

ECB allows players to participate in PSL
K A R A C H I (Monitoring Desk): The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) and the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) resolved on Saturday the matter regarding No Objection Certificates (NOCs) for English players to participate in the Pakistan Super League (PSL). Following discussions, the ECB assured the PCB of issuing NOCs to players selected in the PSL draft. The agreement ensured the availability of English cricketers for the tournament. English players chosen during the draft will represent their respective franchises in the upcoming edition of the league. The PSL 10 had already steal the spotlight of many esteemed players from the different countries. According to details surfaced on Saturday, the latest joining was of the South African, newcomer Corbin Bosch, who was already taking on the Pakistan bowlers with great contempt.

MLB bans two fans who grabbed LA Dodgers' Betts
NEW YORK (Agencies): Two New York Yankees fans who tried to rip the ball from Los Angeles Dodgers' fielder Mookie Betts' glove during game four of the World Series in October have been banned from all Major League Baseball stadiums indefinitely. Betts, 32, was catching a foul ball hit by ex-Yankee Gleyber Torres at the right field wall when the fans, seated in the first row, grabbed his wrist and prised open his glove to take the ball. MLB wrote a letter this week to John P Hansen and Austin Capobianco to say their behaviour at Yankee Stadium "went far over the line of acceptable fan behaviour". The league added if the two men were discovered at any MLB venues or events, they "would be removed from the premises and subject to arrest for trespass". Both fans were ejected from the game - which the Yankees won 11-4 - and were stopped from attending game five the following night, when the Dodgers sealed a 7-6 victory to clinch the championship.

Sohail receives warm welcome
LAHORE (APP): A warm welcome was accorded to newly-crowned British Junior Open U-13 Champion Sohail Adnan during a ceremony at the Punjab Squash Complex here. The ceremony was attended by Noor-ul-Amin Mengal, President Punjab Squash Association (PSA), Secretary Pakistan Squash Federation (PSF) Air Commodore Amir Nawaz, Director Academies PSF Group Captain Irfan, PSA officials, Sohail's parents, fellow players, and a large number of squash enthusiasts. The Pakistan Squash Federation (PSF) takes immense pride in Sohail's remarkable achievement, which marks the first time a Pakistani player has won the U-13 British Junior Open title in 18 years. This victory is expected to pave the way for Sohail to compete for more prestigious titles in the world of squash. President PSF and Senior Vice President congratulated Sohail on his outstanding win, reiterating the federation's commitment to providing all necessary facilities and support to talented players like Sohail Adnan as part of its strategy to revive the lost glory in squash for Pakistan.

Imam makes comeback as PCB announces test squad against West Indies

LAHORE (APP): Left-handed opening batsman Imam ul Haq made a comeback as Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Saturday announced a 15-member squad for the two ICC World Test Championship Tests against the West Indies, scheduled to be played from January 17 to 29 at Multan Stadium Multan. The squad features seven changes from the 15-member Test team that toured South Africa. The retained players are: Shan Masood (captain), Saud Shakeel (vice-captain), Babar Azam, Kamran Ghulam, Khurram Shahzad, Mohammad Rizwan, Noman Ali, and

Salman Ali Agha.

To strengthen the spin department, off-spinner Sajid Khan and mystery spinner Abrar Ahmed have been recalled to partner with left-arm spinner Noman Ali. Openers Imam-ul-Haq and Mohammad Huraira have also been brought back, replacing the injured Saim Ayub and the out-of-form Abdullah Shafique.

As part of workload management, the pace quartet of Aamir Jamal, Mohammad Abbas, Mir Hamza, and Naseem Shah has been rested. In their place, the selectors have retained Khurram Shahzad, recalled Mohammad Ali and included uncapped Kashif Ali.

In the absence of wicket-keeper-batter Haseebullah, who sustained a split in his right-hand webbing during the Cape Town Test, former Pakistan U19 and Shaheens captain Rohail Nazir has been added to the squad.

Pakistan squad for the West Indies Tests: Shan Masood (captain), Saud Shakeel (vice-captain), Abrar Ahmed, Babar Azam, Imam-ul-Haq, Kamran Ghulam, Kashif Ali, Khurram Shahzad, Mohammad Ali, Mohammad Huraira, Mohammad Rizwan (wicketkeeper/batter), Noman Ali, Rohail Nazir (wicketkeeper/batter), Sajid Khan, and Salman Ali Agha.

All Pakistan junior squash c'ship concludes

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The First Javed Alam Khanzada All Pakistan National Junior Boys Squash Championship organized by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Squash Association concluded at the PAF Hashim Khan Squash Complex in Peshawar.

In the Under-11 final PAF's Ahmad Ali Naz defeated fellow PAF player Anas Rafay with scores of 12-10, 11-9, and 11-9. Meanwhile in the Under-17 final Army's Noman Khan clinched the title by defeating PAF's Yahya Asad Khan with scores of 11-4, 11-9, and 14-12.

Former world squash champion and president of



the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Squash Association Qamar Zaman graced the closing ceremony as the chief guest. Also present at the event were Senior Vice President Ehsanullah Khan, Mohibullah Khan, General Secretary Mansoor Zaman, Squash Finance Secretary Wazir

Muhammad, Associate Secretary Sajjad Khalil, Asian Champion Aamir Atlas Khan, Chief Organizer Munawar Zaman, Senior Coach Tahir Iqbal, and Waseem Muhammad.

Players from across the country participated in the championship.

Shami returns to India squad for England T20s

NEW DELHI (AFP): Fast bowler Mohammed Shami on Saturday returned to India's squad for the upcoming T20 international series against England after more than a year's break due to injury.

Shami, 34, last played for India in the 50-over World Cup final in November 2023 and recently participated in a few domestic matches to mark his return to competitive cricket.

Shami, who underwent heel surgery, was expected to join India in Australia in December but missed the 3-

1 Test series loss.

He is part of a 15-member squad for the five T20 matches against England starting January 22 in Kolkata.

White-ball star Suryakumar Yadav will lead the team with spin bowler Axar Patel as his deputy.

Pace bowler Jasprit Bumrah is missing with doubts over his participation in the following three ODI matches with the touring England team due to an injury he suffered in the final Australia Test.

India are yet to announce

the squad for the ODI Champions Trophy starting next month with the deadline to announce the provisional squad for the tournament on Sunday.

India T20 squad to face England: Suryakumar Yadav (capt), Sanju Samson (wk), Abhishek Sharma, Tilak Varma, Hardik Pandya, Rinku Singh, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Axar Patel (vice-capt), Harshit Rana, Arshdeep Singh, Mohammed Shami, Varun Chakravarthy, Ravi Bishnoi, Washington Sundar, Dhruv Jurel (wk).

Shai sparks Thunder in Knicks rout, Kings stun Celtics

NEW YORK (AFP): Shai Gilgeous-Alexander and Isaiah Joe combined for 70 points as the Oklahoma City Thunder bounced back to winning ways with a 126-101 drubbing of the New York Knicks at Madison Square Garden on Friday.

Oklahoma City were left licking their wounds after their much-anticipated tussle against the No.1 ranked Cleveland Cavaliers on Wednesday ended in a chastening defeat.

But the Western Conference leaders showed no signs of a hangover with a blowout victory over the Knicks, in what had been billed as a potential NBA Finals preview.

The Knicks were effectively forced into damage limitation mode after a blistering start from Oklahoma City saw the visitors surge into a 31-17 lead after the first quarter.

The Thunder kept their foot on the pedal in the second, pouring in 39 points to take a mammoth 70-43 halftime lead that the Knicks never looked like catching.

Gilgeous-Alexander spearheaded another dazzling offensive performance from the Thunder, finishing with 39 points from 15-of-21 shooting while Joe caught fire with eight three-pointers off the bench to deliver a 31-point display.

Oklahoma City's win



saw them stretch their lead to 31-6 at the top of the Western Conference standings, six games ahead of the second-placed Houston Rockets.

Celtics jolted In other games Friday, there was an upset in Boston as the reigning champion Celtics stumbled to a 114-97 loss to the Sacramento Kings.

DeMar DeRozan scored 24 points to lead the scoring but the plaudits went to center Domantas Sabonis, who finished with 23 points and a whopping 28 rebounds. Malik Monk added 22 points with Keegan Murray adding 19.

Boston's problems stemmed from a below-par offensive performance which saw them shoot at 40.5%, making only 11 of 41 three-point attempts.

"When you're having inefficient offense, it puts pressure on your defense,"

Celtics coach Joe Mazzulla said. "And if you're only going to shoot 28% from three, it means you're going to have to do a lot of other things really, really, really well. We've got to do better."

In Orlando, Giannis Antetokounmpo spoiled Paolo Banchero's return from injury after a 34-game absence with a 41-point masterpiece to give the Milwaukee Bucks a 109-106 win over the Magic.

Greek star Antetokounmpo also weighed in with 14 rebounds, four assists, three steals and two blocks while Damian Lillard added provided offensive support with 29 points.

Magic star Banchero -- who has missed the last 34 games due to a torn oblique muscle -- finished with 34 points but it was not enough to deny the Bucks victory.



Everton appoint Moyes as manager for second time

LONDON (Agencies): David Moyes said it is "great to be back" after being appointed Everton manager for a second time.

The 61-year-old Scot has signed a two-and-a-half-year contract at Goodison Park following the sacking of Sean Dyche on Thursday. Everton are 16th in the Premier League - one point clear of the relegation zone - with only three wins from 19 games this season. "I enjoyed 11 wonderful and successful years at Everton and didn't hesitate when I was offered the opportunity to rejoin this great club," said Moyes.

"Now we need Goodison and all Evertonians to play their part in getting behind the players in this important season so we can move into our fabulous new stadium as a Premier League team." Moyes managed Everton from 2002 until 2013 before spells in charge of Manchester United, Real Sociedad, Sunderland and West Ham twice. He has been out of work since leaving West Ham, where he won the Europa Conference League in 2023, at the end of last season.

From relegation fight to Champions League - the first Everton spell

Moyes spent 11 years at Everton before leaving to take charge of United as Sir Alex Ferguson's successor in the summer of 2013. Following a four-year spell at Preston, he joined Everton in March 2002, with the Toffees in danger of relegation. Moyes won his first match and went on to take charge of more than 500 games.

Everton reached the FA Cup final in 2009 and finished in the top eight of the Premier League nine times, including fourth in 2004-05, which took them into Champions League qualifying. Moyes gave Wayne Rooney his professional debut and signed several players who would become Everton greats, including Tim Cahill and Marouane Fellaini.

Ups and downs since leaving Everton

Moyes was handpicked by Sir Alex as his successor at Old Trafford but failed to see out the 2013-14 season. He was sacked in April 2014 after 10 months in charge, with United seventh in the table and unable to qualify for the Champions League. Moyes had a year in La Liga with Sociedad before returning to English football with Sunderland, who were relegated from the Premier League in 2016-17.

Sri Lanka bowlers skittle NZ in 140-run win in third ODI

AUCKLAND (AFP): Sri Lanka razed New Zealand's top-order Saturday to comfortably win the third one-day international in Auckland by 140 runs and salvage a lone victory in the series.

The home side's hopes of chasing down Sri Lanka's 290-8 nosedived when they crumbled to 21-5 at Eden Park, before being dismissed for 150 off 29.4 overs.

Sri Lanka rebounded after suffering heavy defeats in the first two games to cede the three-match series. It mirrored the pattern of the preceding T20 series, which New Zealand also won 2-1.

Sri Lanka captain Charith Asalanka was pleased his side could show what they are capable of. "I think it's always great to make comeback like this but unfortunately, we lost first two of both series," he said. "But today, this was a pleasure to watch."

The visitors were led by some lethal seam bowling from Asitha Fernando and Eshan Malinga, who claimed three wickets each, as did spinner Maheesh Theekshana.

Fernando (3-26) was the chief destroyer with the new ball as New Zealand's first five wickets tumbled inside the first seven overs.

The victory margin would have been greater, were it not for Mark Chapman's 81 off 81 balls, the number three New Zealand batsman the last out when he was bowled by Theekshana (3-35). No other New Zealander reached 20, with five of the top six dismissed for two runs or less.

Earlier, injured opener Pathum Nissanka top-scored for Sri Lanka with 66 off 42 balls. Nissanka, was on 50 off 31 balls when he retired hurt after suffering an apparent hip injury, having got his team off to a flying start at 66 without

loss in 10 overs.

He recovered and returned in the 34th over to add a further 16 runs, hitting six fours and five sixes in total. There were half-centuries from Kusal Mendis (54 off 48) and Janith Liyanage (53 off 52) in a vastly improved Sri Lankan batting effort.

New Zealand seamer Matt Henry continued a fine series, claiming 4-55 to lift him to 150 ODI wickets, while captain Mitchell Santner took 2-55 with his spin. Santner said the target of 291 was "about par" at Eden Park but the game was ripped away from them by Sri Lanka's bowlers.

"Asitha got the ball swinging, they took their catches and made it challenging for us," Santner said. "We'll take it on the chin. A little disappointing, probably not the way we wanted to finish the series after playing quite well."

KP under-19 cricket League kicks off in Peshawar



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Under-19 Cricket League Season 1 organized in collaboration with Insaf Sports & Cultural and Markhor Builders commenced at Gymkhana Ground Peshawar.

The league was officially inaugurated by President of the Peshawar District Cricket Association Asghar Ali, accompanied by Secretary Hanif Shah,

organizers Zulfiqar, Shakeel, Fakhr Alam, and Haleem Khan, along with other notable figures.

In the opening match Students Cricket Club defeated Hashnagar Cricket Club by seven wickets. Hashnagar batted first and set a target of 162 runs in the allotted overs with Hamza scoring 90 and Afzal contributing 23 runs. In response, Students Cricket Club achieved the target with three wickets

down. Muhammad Noman scored 86, while Zaid contributed 29 runs.

This is the first time in the province's history that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cricket League is being held, featuring 40 teams from across the province. Notably, eight players from Pakistan's Under-19 Cricket Team are also participating representing various teams. All matches of the league will be played at Gymkhana Ground, Peshawar.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony Asghar Ali President of the Peshawar District Cricket Association praised the organization of such a significant event at the provincial level. He highlighted the immense talent in the province, particularly in cricket and emphasized the importance of such activities in the modern era, terming them essential for youth development.

Knight wants ICC to help 'forgotten' Afghanistan

LONDON (Agencies): England captain Heather Knight has called for the International Cricket Council to do more for the Afghanistan women's team, whom she feels have been "forgotten".

Female participation in sport in the country has effectively been outlawed since the Taliban's return to power in 2021. More than 20 members of their women's cricket team fled to safety in Australia and previously asked the ICC to allow them to play as a refugee team.

The issue has gained further attention in recent weeks as UK politicians have written to the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) calling for England's men to refuse to play against Afghanistan in the Champions Trophy match in Lahore, Pakistan, on 26 February.

Knight said the situation is "complex" but she hopes



to meet some members of the Afghanistan side during the women's Ashes series in Australia, as they are playing in an exhibition match against a Cricket Without Borders XI on 30 January in Melbourne.

"I think it's really good that it's being talked about. Obviously, the situation in Afghanistan is heart-breaking," Knight told BBC Sport before the opening game of the Ashes on Saturday (23:30 GMT).

"It's a complex issue but I think as much as we can publicise the fact that the women's team are playing

out here, we should give those girls a voice because it's a remarkable story that they're actually here. They managed to get out of an extremely dire situation.

"I think those girls have been forgotten a lot. That is my honest opinion, which is a really sad thing. There hasn't been a huge amount of leadership when it comes to Afghan women's cricket team, so I'd love to see them have as much media as possible for that match."

The ECB has also called on the ICC to act, as chief executive Richard Gould wrote to the global governing body to take action after what he called "gender apartheid". He also called for Afghanistan's funding to be withheld until women's cricket is reinstated and support be given to Afghan women's players.

Knight agreed that change and support needed to come from "the top of the game".

Pakistan Rugby Union AGM held

LAHORE (APP): The annual general council meeting (AGM) of the Pakistan Rugby Union Saturday approved minutes of the previous AGM as well as the accounts 2022-23 and 2023-24.

Chairing the annual general council meeting, President Chaudhry Arif Saeed said that Pakistan Rugby Union organized international and local events brilliantly in 2024.

He said the team participated in the Nepal Sevens, Women's and Men's Sevens Championships were held. In addition, the Servis League was completed in 15, which is also ongoing this year. He said that World Rugby and Asia Rugby have full confidence in Pakistan.

Asia Rugby representa-

tive Anatoly also participated in the Zoom meeting.

The meeting was attended by Pakistan Rugby Chairman Fawzi Khawaja, Treasurer Muhammad Haroon, Asia Rugby Vice President Rizwan Malik, Punjab Rugby President Mohsin Iqbal, Executive Committee Member Women's Wing Shireen Hina, Muhammad Umair from KPK, General Manager Pakistan Rugby Union Syed Moazzam Ali Shah, Pakistan Rugby Union Training Head Shakeel Ahmed Malik, Accounts Head Muhammad Asim and via internet Zoom Secretary Pakistan Rugby Union Salman Muzaffar Sheikh, Sardar Khan from Balochistan, Executive Committee Member South

Punjab Muzammil Khan Waziri, Khurram Khawaja from Sindh, Bilal Butt from Islamabad.

The President PRU said that the Pakistan Rugby Union is working hard on Under-19, Under-18 and Women. Arif Saeed said that the Pakistan Rugby Union is among those federations that complete their meetings and on-ground activities. On this occasion, a briefing was also given about the growing popularity and events of Pakistan Rugby in South Punjab, KPK, Secretary Salman Muzaffar gave a complete briefing about the sponsors and events of the last year. The Secretary said that in 2025, women will have more representation and their events will also be organized.



In brief

MSO commemorate 24th anniversary

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Muslim Students Organization (MSO) on Saturday marked its 24th founding anniversary with a seminar titled "Hayya 'Ala Al-Quran" (Come to the Quran) at the National Press Club. The event attracted a significant number of students from universities, colleges, and madrasas, alongside political, religious, and student organization leaders, said a press release. Arsalan Kiyani, Central President of MSO and the chief guest of the seminar, underscored the importance of understanding and adhering to the Quran's teachings. He emphasized that the Quran serves as a comprehensive guide for success in both this world and the hereafter. Citing Hazrat Ayesha (RA), he noted that the life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was a reflection of Quranic principles. Key speakers included former Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, Dr. Maulana Tanveer Ahmed Alvi (Naib Muhtamim of Jamia Muhammadiyah), Sher Afzal Marwat of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, and Abdul Rauf Chaudhry, MSO's Central Nazim General and they collectively commended MSO for its dedication to promoting Islamic values and expressed optimism about its continued positive influence in the country's educational institutions. The seminar provided a platform for meaningful discussions on incorporating Quranic teachings into daily life and emphasized the critical role organizations like MSO play in fostering Islamic principles and societal progress.

IRSA releases 31,500 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Saturday released 31,500 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 38,400 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1476.19 feet and was 78.19 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 16,100 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1133.45 feet, which was 83.45 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 4,800 cusecs and 4,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 22,300, 12,500, 4,200 and 6,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 11,900 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 5,600 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

CTP hold workshop for Rickshaw drivers

RAWALPINDI (APP): City Traffic Police (CTP) Rawalpindi here on Saturday held an awareness workshop for Rickshaw and Bykea drivers at traffic police headquarters. Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Beenish Fatima addressing the workshop said that the aim of this road safety awareness workshop is to prevent accidents and ensure the safety of precious lives. The drivers will also be made aware of obtaining licenses to eliminate the culture of recommendation and also listen to the problems of drivers and take steps to provide solution. The biggest reason for accidents on the roads is lack of awareness about traffic rules, she said adding, the carelessness of drivers and non-compliance with traffic rules result in the loss of citizens' lives. The aim of this training workshop was to make Rawalpindi city safer and prevent accidents, she added.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi in a meeting with British High Commissioner Jane Marriott. —APP Photo

Pakistan, Egypt agree to strengthen bilateral ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Chaudhary Salik Hussain on Saturday met with a high-level delegation led by Egypt's Grand Mufti Dr. Nazir Muhammad Ayyad.

During the meeting, various proposals were discussed regarding the rising trend of religious intolerance in the world, eradication of terrorism, sectarianism, establishment of peace, and promotion of interfaith harmony.

Chaudhary Salik Hussain stated that Pakistan and Egypt are bound by historical, religious, and cultural ties that encompass many dimensions, and it is essential to introduce our new generation to our historical heritage. In light of the challenges and circumstances that Muslim countries are currently facing, he said there is a need to promote

religious harmony, tolerance, and unity. He said there is an urgent need for dialogue between religions and cultures to establish peace in the world. He said an attitude of tolerance and respect is an essential component of Islamic teachings.

Chaudhary Salik Hussain said Pakistan and Egypt should work together to promote religious harmony, peace, and tolerance in the world through interfaith and intercultural dialogue. The meeting also agreed to further enhance the economic, trade, and cultural relations between Pakistan and Egypt.

Egypt's Grand Mufti Dr. Nazir Ayad remarked that in view of the growing menace of terrorism globally, there is a need to develop a joint action plan to counter it.

He suggested that Pakistan should send its scholars to Egypt to bene-

fit from the experiences and teachings of one of the oldest educational institutions in the world.

Additionally, a decision was made to establish a campus of Al-Azhar University in Pakistan to promote contemporary teachings during the meeting.

Chaudhary Salik Hussain welcomed the decision to open a campus of Al-Azhar in Pakistan and assured full cooperation in this regard.

The meeting also concluded with an agreement to increase cooperation between Pakistan and Egypt in order to eliminate extremism and promote interfaith harmony. The meeting was attended by Egypt's Ambassador Dr. Ihab Abdelhamid Hassan, Secretary of the Ministry of Religious Affairs Zulfikar Haider, and Additional Secretary Dr. Atta-ur-Rehman.

ICT Police seize massive cache of arms

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police successfully thwarted a smuggling operation on Saturday, seizing a large consignment of weapons, ammunition and narcotics, thereby averting a major security threat to the federal capital.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations and Investigation Arsalan Shahzeb, speaking to media representatives at Tarnol Police Station, detailed the operation. The police intercepted a suspicious vehicle attempting to transport a significant quantity of weapons and drugs from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to Islamabad.

"The seized items include 168 Glock pistols, 69 Beretta pistols, 19 thirty-bore pistols, 15 Makarov pistols, one 32-bore pistol, four MP-5 carbines, 10 twelve-bore shotguns, two double-barrel shotguns, and three 44-bore rifles," SSP Shahzeb said. SSP added that over 23,540 rounds of ammunition, including 12,500 rounds of 30-bore, 4,040 rounds of 44-bore, 4,000 rounds of 9 mm, 2,900 rounds of 308 and 100 rounds of 7 mm, were recovered. An official told APP that the weapons, narcotics were also confiscated, including 150 grams of ice and 4.450 kilograms of heroin powder.

The arrested suspect, identified as Raza Muhammad, is a habitual offender with a criminal history involving eight cases registered across various districts of Punjab. A case has been registered at Tarnol Police Station, and further investigations are underway to dismantle the network behind the smuggling attempt and identify any accomplices. Recognizing the team's efforts, DIG Syed Ali Raza announced commendation certificates for the officers involved. He emphasized that the ICT Police remain steadfast in ensuring the federal capital's peace and security.

"The protection of citizens' lives and property is our top priority. Miscreants will not be allowed to disturb the peace of Islamabad," he stated. Surveillance through Safe City Islamabad's modern cameras and checkpoints at city entrances and exits continues around the clock to safeguard the capital.

KP's security crisis deepens, tourism sector suffers: Kundi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Faisal Karim Kundi said on Saturday that the provincial government has failed to maintain law and order in the region.

Talking to a private news channel, he said that security situation in KP was deteriorating and the law and order situation is

far from satisfactory in the province.

He further stated that the province was being driven towards instability, with worsening conditions impacting even the tourism sector.

"When tourists are not allowed to visit, it clearly signals that the situation is dire," he said.

He said that the public

sector institutions in KP were in the dire state, noting that 34 universities in the province currently working without vice-chancellors.

Answering a question regarding the PTT's demands for dialogue, he said that "The founder of PTT will not be freed through protests, rallies, or black-mailing."

Advocate demands independent commission

ISLAMABAD (APP): Advocate Usman Warraich, on Saturday urged to establish an independent inquiry commission to probe the matter in online trapping cases.

He expressed the view along with lawyers Rana Abdul Hameed, Imaan Mazari, and parents of the affected children in National Press Club (NPC), the press release said.

He emphasized that this commission should also consider the reports of

National Commission of Human Right (NCHR) and Special Branch.

He demanded that all proceedings in these cases be halted and innocent children be released until the commission completed its findings. He also urged forensic analysis of the mobile phones of both victims and complainants.

While quoting the special Branch report, he claimed that more than 450 young Muslims have fallen victim to these fab-

ricated cases, with more than 150 imprisoned in Adiala Jail, over 170 in Lahore's Camp Office and Kot Lakhpat Jail, and 55 in Karachi Central Jail.

These groups also pressurizing the family members of the innocent people, he said. The activities of this group extended beyond Islamabad, said Warraich.

He also appealed the government to take immediate actions against those involved in online trapping.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Inter-Faith Harmony Chaudhary Salik Hussain presenting a souvenir to Dr. Nazir Mohamed Ayyad, Grand Mufti of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

ANF recovers over 19 kg drugs in eight operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting eight operations across the country recovered 19.876 kg drugs worth over Rs 9.6 million and arrested 12 suspects including four women, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Saturday.

He informed that two suspects including a woman going to Riyadh were arrested at Islamabad International Airport. 75 heroin-filled capsules were recovered from their stomachs.

6 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of

a suspect arrested near a bridge on IJP Road Islamabad.

In third operation, 3.5 kg heroin was recovered from the possession of three suspects rounded up near F-Block, Johar Town, Lahore.

2,670 kg hashish was recovered from a vehicle intercepted near Bella Road in G-10 Islamabad and 2 suspects were arrested during the operation.

2.5 kg opium was recovered from a woman netted near a hotel in Hyderabad.

2 kg ice was recovered from the possession of a woman held near Al-Asif

Bus Terminal on Airport Road Quetta.

The spokesman informed that 1,280 kg hashish was recovered from two parcels sent to Lahore and Karachi through a courier office in Peshawar.

In eighth operation, 1.3 kg ice hidden in a vehicle near Kakpul Stop Expressway Islamabad was recovered and two accused including a woman were arrested.

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

IGP reviews performance, sets goals for crime-free 2025

ISLAMABAD (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi chaired a series of high-level meetings on Friday at the Central Police Office (CPO) late at night, attended by senior officers including DIG Syed Ali Raza, DIG Headquarters Muhammad Jawad Tariq and DG Safe City Shakir Hussain Dawar.

A police spokesperson told APP that during these meetings, the IGP Rizvi reviewed the performance of all divisions and the progress reports of their departments. Rizvi issued orders to the officers to make Islamabad crime-free in 2025, ensuring the full protection of its citizens. IG emphasized that officers should effectively use modern technology to safeguard the public and eliminate criminal elements in accordance with contemporary requirements.

IGP Rizvi also set new targets to enhance the performance of the Dolphin Squad. IG urged officers to further improve the squad's effectiveness by ensuring efficient patrolling and a prompt response to emergency calls across Islamabad. Additionally, he assigned important tasks to the officers, providing them with specific time frames.

Furthermore, the IGP Rizvi reviewed the performance of the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) and the Anti-Riot Unit (ARU). IG issued orders to align the CTD and ARU with modern technology and counter-terrorism strategies, aimed at maintaining law and order. IG Rizvi stressed that all officers should perform their duties diligently to ensure the protection of public life and property while maintaining peace throughout the city. The protection of citizens' lives and property is the top priority of Islamabad Police, he added.

IGP Rizvi also assessed the performance of the Capital Police College (CPC) Islamabad and issued orders to SP Tahir Khan to include IT and modern technology training courses as part of various police training programs, along with a focus on the moral training of officers.

RDA reviews compliance of private housing schemes with rules

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) on the directives of the Director General (DG), Kinza Murtaza, here on Saturday held a meeting to review compliance of private housing schemes with applicable rules and regulations.

Additional Director General (ADG) RDA, Awais Manzoor Tarar chaired the meeting with the primary focus to ensure that housing schemes adhere to the Private Housing Scheme (PHS) Rules and approved Layout Plans (LOPs). The meeting also reviewed the deposit of applicable fees, levies and fines, as well as the completion of mandatory plot mortgages and the transfer of amenity plots in favor of the RDA.

The ADG emphasized the importance of regulatory compliance and the timely payment of all the dues, reiterating RDA's commitment to maintaining transparency and upholding legal and environmental standards. RDA officers including representatives from Engineering, Estate Management, Planning, and Building Control departments attended the meeting.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of China to Pakistan, Jiang Zaidong visiting stalls during an event regarding Chinese New Year. —APP Photo

Meeting addresses issues

KABUL (BNA): This morning, the Administrative Commission of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan convened under the chairmanship of Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi, Deputy Prime Minister. The meeting witness active participation from all commission members as they reviewed the progress and performance of various committees. According to a press release, committee representatives provided detailed reports on their assigned tasks.

Skirmishes delay aid delivery

KABUL (Amu TV): WFP has postponed food distribution in Barmal and Giyan districts of Paktika due to border skirmishes. The clashes, which have also impacted Paktya and Khost, have prompted the WFP to monitor the situation closely for potential internal displacement. The delays come amid Afghanistan's deepening humanitarian crisis, with the UN estimating that nearly 23 million people, including over 12 million children, will require aid in 2025.

Masoud calls Afghans ‘brothers’, vows to pursue water rights



KABUL (Ariana News): Calling Afghans as brothers, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said that Tehran will pursue the issue of water rights with Afghanistan through dialogue. “Afghans are our brothers, a Muslim is a brother to a Muslim, not an enemy. When the Messenger of God conquered Makkah, all the leaders of infidels surrendered. The Messenger of God said, all Muslims are brothers, he did not say that they had just converted to Islam. If we are Muslims and accept the Sunnah of

the Messenger and the Book of God, we are all brothers,” Pezeshkian said during his visit to Sistan and Baluchistan Province. “Let’s help each other so that both sides develop. Everyone benefits and everyone wins. If we correct our perspective, all Muslims will achieve dignity,” he added. Speaking in an interview with IRNA news agency, Pezeshkian also said that Iranian officials will discuss the issue of water rights with the Islamic Emirate so that “we can have

our share of water rights.” Iranian officials have repeatedly called on the Islamic Emirate to ensure the country’s water rights. The Political Deputy Prime Minister, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, in meeting with Iran’s acting ambassador to Kabul, recently said the issue of water rights between the two countries has been resolved through mutual understanding and irresponsible statements on this matter could negatively affect the relations between Kabul and Tehran.

Concerns raised over Kabul’s cleanliness

KABUL (TOLONews): Several Kabul residents have criticized what they describe as a lack of attention to urban culture and cleanliness in the city. They say that maintaining the city’s cleanliness is not solely the responsibility of the municipality, but a duty shared by all citizens. With Kabul’s growing population, some individuals show negligence in keeping the city clean and adhering to urban principles. “Sometimes you see people eating or drinking in their cars and throwing their

trash onto the road. Others leave their garbage on streets and in parks,” said Osman, a resident of Kabul. “We must keep our city clean, pay attention to it, and cooperate with government employees who work to maintain its cleanliness,” said Sayed Mahdi, another resident of Kabul. Kabul Municipality states that it has several programs in place to promote urban culture. The institution has called on citizens to cooperate in keeping the city clean. “Thankfully, Kabul

Municipality has various programs to promote urban culture. Certain improper behaviors, such as throwing trash on roads and sidewalks, are urban violations. We ask citizens to cooperate with the municipality because the order and cleanliness of the city result from the responsibility of all its citizens,” said Nematullah Barakzai, a representative of Kabul Municipality. Urban culture encompasses a set of rules and principles that contribute to the order and beauty of a city.

Afghan passport ranks least powerful globally

KABUL (Ariana News): Afghanistan’s passport has been ranked the least powerful in the world, securing the 106th spot on the latest Henley Passport Index. This ranking highlights the severe travel restrictions faced by Afghan citizens, who can only access 26 countries without a visa. The Henley Passport Index, a leading global ranking system for passports, evaluates countries based on the number of destinations their passport holders can visit visa-free.

Afghanistan’s position at the bottom underscores the challenges in global mobility for its citizens, who face significant barriers in travel compared to those from other nations. At the opposite end of the spectrum, Singapore boasts the world’s most powerful passport, offering its citizens access to 194 countries and territories without a visa. Japan and Finland follow closely in second and third place, respectively, with similarly high levels

of travel freedom. The Henley Passport Index is compiled using data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA), the world’s largest travel information database, complemented by extensive research from Henley and Partners. The report offers an authoritative look into global passport rankings, providing insight into how nationalities can navigate the world without the added complication of visa requirements.

MSF continues free health services in Bamyan



BAMYAM (BNA): In a recent meeting between Mawlawi Abdullah Sarhadi, the governor of Bamyan, and Michael Le Pie, the head of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), the organization reaffirmed its commitment to providing free health services in the province throughout this year. During the meeting, the Director General of MSF in Afghanistan highlighted the organization’s ongoing health activities in Bamyan,

emphasizing the importance of coordinating efforts with local government leadership. He stated, “We are dedicated to ensuring that all health services are delivered effectively and in consultation with local authorities.” In a significant development, MSF is set to donate two ambulances, fully equipped with medical supplies, to the Bamyan Provincial Hospital later this month. This initiative comes as a

response to the hospital’s needs and aims to enhance patient care in the region. Governor Sarhadi expressed his appreciation for MSF’s impactful health services, particularly praising the upcoming ambulance donation. He urged the organization to extend its focus on health initiatives in both central and underserved areas of Bamyan, noting that remote districts have been significantly affected and require more attention.

Two Afghans executed in Iran

KABUL (Khaama Press): In response to international calls to halt executions in Iran, the human rights organization Hengaw reported the execution of five individuals, including two Afghan citizens, at Ghezel Hesar Prison in Karaj, Iran. The organization, stated that the executions were carried out by Ghezel Hesar authorities. According to the report, these individuals were convicted of premeditated murder and sentenced to death by the Islamic Republic of Iran. The human rights organization identified one of the executed Afghan citizens as “Amanullah Tajik.”

This comes amid increasing criticism from human rights organizations regarding the rising number of executions in Iran, with repeated calls to end this practice. Recently, Volker Türk, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, expressed deep concern over the sharp rise in executions in Iran and urged the country to stop the “wave of executions.” According to UN statistics, the number of executions in Iran increased to 901 in 2024, marking the highest figure in 15 years. Reports indicate that most executions in Iran are linked to crimes such as drug trafficking, premeditated murder, sexual assault, and politically related charges. The “Death Penalty Information Center” reported that Iran topped the global list with 882 documented executions in 2024. The continued rise in executions highlights the urgent need for international advocacy and diplomatic efforts to address human rights concerns in Iran. Governments and global organizations must work collectively to promote fair trials and alternative approaches to justice. Fostering dialogue and engagement with Iranian authorities on human rights issues, alongside consistent international pressure, can pave the way for systemic reforms. This would ensure a more humane and equitable justice system in the country.

Kabir appointed Minister

KABUL (TOLONews): Mawlawi Abdul Kabir has been appointed acting Minister of Refugees and Repatriation. Zabiullah Mujahid, the spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate, stated that this decision was made based on a decree issued by the leader of the Islamic Emirate. Regarding the matter, Mujahid said: “The changes in the Deputy Premiership and the appointment of Mawlawi Abdul Kabir as Acting Minister of Refugees are routine measures aimed at improving governance. This is not a new development unfamiliar to the officials of the Islamic Emirate.” Jabar Akbari, a political analyst, said: “Appointments and dismissals are necessary in all systems. One person leaves, and another is appointed. However, such changes should prioritize the national interests of the people and uphold all the values of the Afghan nation.”

Although the leader of the Islamic Emirate has appointed Mawlawi Abdul Kabir as the Acting Minister of Refugees, it is still unclear who will assume the responsibility of the Political Deputy Premiership. Over the past week, Suhail Shaheen, the head of the Islamic Emirate’s political office in Doha, was appointed acting Ambassador of the Islamic Emirate to Qatar. Additionally, Mohammad Naeem, the former acting ambassador, has been appointed as the Administrative Deputy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Mawlawi Abdul Kabir is originally from Paktika province and was born in the Tangai Zadrán village of Nahrin district in Baghlan province.

Nimroz ends use of Iranian toman in Transactions

NIMROZ (TOLONews): Local authorities in Nimroz say that following the ban on transactions in foreign currencies, the use of the Iranian toman in the province has almost completely ceased. According to the authorities, until a year ago, all small and large transactions in Nimroz were conducted in Iranian tomons, and many people in the province were not familiar with Afghan currency. However, in recent months, the Afghan currency has gradually gained traction in the markets of Zaranj, replacing the

Iranian toman. “Transactions in foreign currencies are completely prohibited and no longer take place. However, if any transactions in foreign currencies occur, the relevant authorities take serious action. We hope this issue will be completely resolved soon,” said Habibullah Elham, the head of Information and Culture in Nimroz. Some residents of Nimroz have spoken about the positive effects of this change and believe that the use of the Iranian toman in the past caused economic losses for them. “This step by the Islamic

Emirate is very good. Previously, we bought goods in afghani but sold them in tomons, and at the end of the year, when we calculated, we found ourselves in debt. But now this problem has been solved,” Said Omid Qaderi, a shopkeeper. “When the toman was in the market, its value constantly fluctuated, and we suffered losses. But now that transactions are done in afghanis, we no longer face such losses,” said Mohammad Ismail, another shopkeeper. Currently, the use of Iranian tomons is restricted

to currency exchange markets. “The use of tomons in markets is prohibited. Only travelers coming from or going to Iran use the toman. We buy tomons from travelers and sell them to others,” said Ahmad, a money exchanger in Zaranj. Nimroz, which borders Iran, conducted most of its daily transactions in Iranian tomons over the past two decades. Local authorities say that due to the low value of the toman and its constant fluctuations, merchants and residents of the province suffered significant losses.

Badakhshan University to establish Faculty of Medicine

B A D A K H S H A N (TOLONews): Officials of Badakhshan University have announced that, based on the directive of the leader of the Islamic Emirate, the establishment of a Faculty of Medicine at the university has been approved. The president of Badakhshan University stated that the estimated cost of the teaching building and the associated hospital is over 260 million afghani, and construction is scheduled to begin next year. The goal of establishing this faculty is to expand standard higher education in the field of medicine, provide quality healthcare services, and address the health issues of the people in Badakhshan.



“The Faculty of Medicine will be established with three departments. The estimated cost for the teaching building is 68 million afghani, and the cost for the associated hospital is 200 million afghani. Construction work on this project will commence next year,” said Nazar Mohammad Niazi, the head of Badakhshan University. Some residents of the northeastern zone see the establishment of the Faculty of Medicine as a

significant step toward improving healthcare services and addressing existing challenges in the region. “Badakhshan province and other provinces in the northeastern zone face a shortage of qualified academic staff. This initiative can address this shortage,” said Abdul Baais Hakimi, a resident of Badakhshan. “The four provinces in this zone were in serious need of a Faculty of Medicine. We are very pleased with this initiative,” said Ghulam Ali, a

resident of Takhar. Meanwhile, several girls in Badakhshan have expressed their interest in studying at this faculty and have called on the Islamic Emirate to reopen educational institutions for girls. “With the establishment of the Faculty of Medicine at Badakhshan University, we also wish to study in this faculty. We ask the Islamic Emirate to provide opportunities for girls’ education,” said Fawzia Frotan, a resident of Badakhshan. “Our demand is that edu-

cational opportunities for girls be provided within the framework of Islamic Sharia,” said Asiya Amani, another resident of Badakhshan. The Faculty of Medicine at Badakhshan University was initially established in 1998 by a decree of then-President Burhanuddin Rabbani and operated until 2004; however, its activities were halted due to a lack of qualified academic staff and the absence of standard hospitals for practical training.

New \$50 million petroleum refinery opens in Balkh

BALKH (BNA): The Afghan Yasini Oil Refinery has officially commenced operations in Balkh, marking a significant milestone in the region’s industrial landscape. The refinery was inaugurated with an investment of \$50 million, aimed at bolstering Afghanistan’s reconstruction and economic growth. During the inauguration ceremony, Balkh Governor Mohammad Yousuf Wafa emphasized the newfound

opportunities for investment within the country. He stated, “The time of tyranny and corruption is over, and now one Emir, one decree, and one unified system governs the entire country.” Governor Wafa expressed appreciation to local businessmen and urged other industrialists to return to Afghanistan and invest in its future. Suhrab Samadi, head of the Afghan Yasini Oil Refinery, revealed that the

plant was developed with an initial investment of \$15 million and occupies 50 jerbs of land. With a daily refining capacity of 600 tons, the facility is expected to process approximately 18,000 tons of oil monthly. The refinery also provides employment for over 100 individuals, contributing to local job creation. Qari Amir Mohammad Muttaqi, head of industry and commerce in Balkh, commended the refinery’s

inauguration as a positive step for the region. He noted that investments are being made across various sectors in Balkh, leading to a significant increase in the country’s exports. The opening of the Afghan Yasini Oil Refinery is anticipated to play a crucial role in Afghanistan’s economic recovery and development, reinforcing the commitment to enhance local industries and create sustainable job opportunities.

559 Afghan families return to Afghanistan from neighbor states

KABUL (Amu TV): At least 559 Afghan migrant families returned to Afghanistan from neighbor countries between January 6 and January 11, according to data reviewed by Amu from figures released by the Taliban. During this period, 434 families returned from Iran, with many forcibly deported or leaving voluntarily, while 125 families were deported neighbor countries. The figures reflect six days of the week, as the

Taliban-run Bakhtar news agency did not release data. Of the returning families, 67 entered Afghanistan through the border crossing, and 58 returned via Spin Boldak. Meanwhile, 159 families crossed through the Pul-e-Abrisham border in Nimroz Province, and 275 families returned via the Islam Qala border with Iran. In the previous week, from December 29 to January 5, a total of 421

Afghan migrant families were deported neighbor countries, according to Amu’s analysis. Iran accounted for 304 deportations, while deported 117 families. The rise in migrant returns follows intensified efforts by neighbor countries to detain, collect, and deport Afghan migrants. Over the past two weeks, neighbor countries’ police have detained hundreds of Afghan migrants, including

women and children, deporting them through border crossings with Afghanistan. Reports indicate that some deported migrants had valid residency documents but were detained and sent back regardless. Iran has similarly escalated its detention and deportation of Afghan migrants, with officials reiterating that undocumented migrants will not be allowed to stay in the country.

IE emphasizes regional security in meeting with Chechen team

KABUL (BNA): Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, the Deputy Prime Minister for Political Affairs, met with a high-level delegation from Chechnya at the Sepadar Palace. The delegation, which included Amrov Jambulatt, the head of the Chechen Academy of Sciences, and the deputy head of the Council of Nationalities of Russia, arrived in

Afghanistan on behalf of the Chechen president and the Russian Federation. During the meeting, Jambulatt expressed his satisfaction with the visit and highlighted the importance of strengthening relations between Afghanistan and Russia in scientific, religious, cultural, and economic fields. He emphasized his commitment to

fostering positive ties between the two countries. Mawlawi Abdul Kabir welcomed the delegation and acknowledged the commonalities Islamic countries share with Afghanistan in religious, cultural, and social aspects. He expressed hope for the development of these commonalities through mutual cooperation.

Deputy PM Mawlawi Kabir noted Russia’s expertise in infrastructure development and conveyed hopes that it could play a significant role in Afghanistan’s reconstruction efforts. He also stated that the Islamic Emirate views its national interests as intrinsically linked to regional security and stability.

Thousands gather in Germany to protest far-right AfD congress

BERLIN: Thousands of protesters shouting “No to Nazis” gathered in the German town of Riesa, where the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party held a key convention approving co-leader Alice Weidel as candidate for chancellor in next month’s snap election.

The meeting, which brought 600-odd delegates together on Saturday, eventually got under way two hours behind schedule after police cleared thousands of protesters mounting blockades in the AfD stronghold town, located in the eastern state of Saxony. Protest organisers, who said 12,000 people from around the country turned up for the demonstration, said police hit groups of demonstrators and used pepper spray to disperse them.

Maria Schmidt, spokeswoman for the protest organisers, said: “Today we are protecting the right of people to live in safety without the fear of deportation or being attacked. “We are all making it clear: Riesa is not a peaceful place for fascism,” she said.

Police claimed about 8,000 demonstrators had assembled outside the town’s convention centre. By late

morning, a spokesman said there was “no serious unrest” but that one road on the way to Riesa remained blocked by protesters. As the congress got under way inside the convention centre, Weidel congratulated her party colleagues for “defying the left-wing mob” while party co-leader Tino Chrupalla accused the demonstrators of acting like “anti-democrats and terrorists”. Analysts say that Weidel – who was this week endorsed by tech billionaire Elon Musk in a livestreamed chat on X – has no realistic chance of becoming Germany’s leader in the February 23 election.

While polls show the far-right party in second place, attracting the support of about 20 percent of the electorate, other parties have refused to work with it. The two-day AfD meeting will see delegates finalising the party’s election programme, with one proposed amendment committing the party to a policy of “remigration” – meaning a wide-ranging campaign to expel foreigners from Germany. Controversy has also been stirred by the party leadership’s plans to replace its Junge Alternative (“Young Alternative”) youth wing, which has

been classified as an extremist group by intelligence services.

A draft version of the manifesto also includes a pledge to leave the euro and a reversal of Germany’s exit from nuclear power. Friedrich Merz, candidate for the mainstream conservative opposition Union bloc that leads polls with about 30 percent, is currently favoured to become the next chancellor. The Union is focusing on boosting Germany’s stagnant economy and reducing irregular migration.

At a news conference in Hamburg, Merz focused on bringing “fundamental change” after the unpopular and fractious coalition of centre-left Chancellor Olaf Scholz collapsed in November. Scholz’s coalition government fell apart after he fired his finance minister in a dispute over how to revitalise the economy, leading to an early election. Scholz conceded on Saturday that mistakes were made, but said it was time to look to the future. “Let’s fight,” he told delegates at a party convention in Berlin, which formally confirmed his nomination as its candidate in a show of hands. — Al Jazeera



BERLIN: A police officer clashes with an activist outside venue for far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party congress in Riesa, Germany.

ZAB Expressway will reduce pressure



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that the Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Expressway will ensure smooth and uninterrupted access to the highway. The Sindh government’s state-of-the-art expressway will benefit businesses, passengers, and industries alike.

Human smuggling: FIA arrests key suspect

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has arrested a key suspect involved in human smuggling, identified as a mastermind, from Lahore’s Sham Nagar area.

As per details, the accused woman, who is named in multiple cases, was allegedly involved in trapping citizens and taking millions of rupees by promising them employment abroad. According to the FIA spokesperson, the suspect would lure people with false promises of employment and then fleece them of their hard-earned money.

Earlier, the Federal Investigation Agency Immigration conducted a major operation and foiled a human smuggling attempt at Islamabad Airport. The FIA spokesperson claimed to have arrested 13 passengers bound to travel to Libya and Italy under the guise of Umrah visas.

The operation resulted in the arrest of the facilitator, Asad Iqbal, and 13 passengers who were attempting to leave for Saudi Arabia on flight ER-807. The FIA official upon found suspicion stopped the individuals for routine check, leading to an interrogation of the passengers. Meanwhile, the authorities found evidence from mobile phones which revealed contacts with human trafficking agents, confirming that the group planned to travel from Saudi Arabia to Libya and Italy illegally.

The arrested individuals included Ehtesham, Adil, Shehryar, Ali Hamza,

Murad, and Suleman, among others. The accused, hailing from Peshawar, Attock, and Sialkot, were linked to a main agent, Sameer Qayyum, based in Libya. They had paid substantial amounts to various agents for illegal travel from Libya to Italy. All suspects were transferred to the Anti-Human Trafficking Circle Islamabad for further investigation and legal proceedings.

Meanwhile, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has apprehended the individual behind viral edited pictures of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz.

According to FIA, the accused, identified as Bilal Malik, was arrested by the FIA’s Cybercrime Wing in Lahore. Malik allegedly launched a smear campaign against Maryam Nawaz and the UAE President on social media platforms.

Earlier, the Federal Investigation Agency’s (FIA) Cybercrime Wing launched investigation into the edited pictures of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz on social media. As per details, the inquiry was initiated against the culprits following a request from the Punjab government. The edited pictures, which appear to show Maryam Nawaz with the President of the UAE, were widely shared on social media platforms.

The FIA stated that action will be taken against those responsible for uploading and sharing the edited content. As part of the investigation, the FIA’s Cybercrime Wing will be conducting inquiries across the country, including Lahore.

Lebanon’s new president says to visit S Arabia on first official trip

BEIRUT: Lebanon’s newly-elected president, Joseph Aoun, will visit Saudi Arabia following an invitation from Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, according to a statement posted on the Lebanese presidency’s X account on Saturday.

Prince Mohammed has congratulated Aoun, during a phone call, on his election and conveyed to him the congratulations of Saudi King Salman. The Crown Prince also expressed his sincere congratulations and hopes for success to Aoun and the people of Lebanon, with wishes for further progress and prosperity.

Aoun told the crown prince that “Saudi Arabia would be the first destination in his visits abroad,” it said, after the Saudi prince called to congratulate him on taking office on Thursday following a two-year vacancy in the position. The statement did not specify a date for the visit. Aoun, 61, was elected as the country’s 14th president by parliamentarians during a second round of

voting on Thursday, breaking a 26-month deadlock over the position.

In his speech after taking his oath of office before parliament, he said that the country was entering a new phase. The Mediterranean country has been without a president since the term of Michel Aoun – not related – ended in October 2022, with tensions between the Iran-backed Hezbollah movement and its opponents scuppering a dozen previous votes. Joseph Aoun, Lebanon’s army chief who was elected president, is a political neophyte whose position as head of one of the country’s most respected institutions helped end a two-year deadlock. Widely seen as the preferred pick of army backer the United States, he is perceived as being best placed to maintain a fragile ceasefire and pull the country out of financial collapse.

After being sworn in at parliament, Aoun said “a new phase in Lebanon’s history” was beginning. Analysts said Aoun, who turns 61 on Friday and is

considered a man of “personal integrity,” was the right candidate to finally replace Michel Aoun — no relation — whose term as president ended in October 2022, without a successor until now. A dozen previous attempts to choose a president failed amid tensions between Hezbollah and its opponents, who have accused the Shiite group of seeking to impose its preferred candidate.

Aoun has since 2017 headed the army, an institution that serves as a rare source of unity in a country riven by sectarian and political divides. He has navigated it through a blistering financial crisis that has drastically slashed the salaries of its 80,000 soldiers, forcing him to accept international aid. Since late November, he oversaw the gradual mobilization of the armed forces in south Lebanon after a ceasefire ended more than a year of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah. — Arab News

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