

Bunkers demolition starts

PESHAWAR (APP): The demolition of bunkers in Kurram was postponed on Sunday and will now begin tomorrow. The Deputy Commissioner of Kurram has issued directives to the relevant authorities in Upper and Lower Kurram, instructing them to arrange the necessary machinery and teams for the operation. The bunkers in Balishkhel and Kar Kili have been identified for demolition.

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Tarar grieved

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar on Sunday expressed deep grief over the passing of Senior Journalist Javed Shahzad. In a condolence message, the minister prayed for the departed soul and offered his condolences to the bereaved family. He acknowledged Javed Shahzad's contributions to journalism.

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ISLAMABAD: Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Malala Yousafzai receives souvenir from Muslim World League Secretary General Muhammad Bin Abdul Karim Al-Issa

## 12 bodies of trapped miners recovered

QUETTA (INP): Rescue teams have completed relief operation and recovered all dead bodies of the miners who had been trapped under the rubble after a gas explosion inside a coalmine 40 kilometres from Quetta.

Chief Mines Officer Abdul Ghani Baloch told media the media that dead bodies of eight miners were recovered after rescue efforts of 60 hours. Mines

Officer said after the explosion, the main entrance of the mine has closed.

According to Chief Inspector Mines Abdul Ghani bodies of three miners were recovered on the first and one on second day and remaining 8 miners were recovered on Sunday from a depth of about 4,500 feet.

The accident had occurred in the coal mine in Sanjeedi on Thursday due

to methane gas overflow. Officials say that teams of PDMAO mines workers jointly conducted a rescue operation to evacuate the miners.

Among the deceased miners, 10 belong to Shangla district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, one from Swat district and one from Balochistan. More than 70 thousand miners work in these coal mines in Balochistan.

## No new infectious disease emerges in China

BEIJING (APP): There's no new infectious disease emerged in China recently; and overall positive rate for human metapneumovirus (HMPV) testing is rising but fluctuating near a plateau, with a decline observed in northern China, said Chinese health officials on Sunday.

They also dismissed claims of medical resource strain due to recent spike of respiratory infectious diseases, said medicines are in adequate supply.

Currently, China is suffering from peak season for respiratory infectious diseases, and various pathogens can cause respiratory infections, Global Times reported.

Wang Liping, a research fellow at the China CDC said at a news briefing that monitoring shows that influenza is the primary disease leading to visits by patients with acute respiratory infections in medical institutions.

According to monitoring data, influenza is currently in a seasonal epidemic phase, with the intensity of the outbreak at a moderate level in most provinces, Wang said. At present, the upward trend in the influenza positivity rate has begun to slow down.

As primary and secondary schools across the country gradually enter their winter break, it is expected that the level of influenza activity may decline in the latter half of this month.

The influenza virus positivity rate among China's outpatient and emergency influenza drug cases increased by 3.8 percent compared with two weeks ago but remained below the level of the same period last year, said Gao Xinqiang, an official from China's National Health Commission (NHC), at the conference.

## Fin Min meets with Servis Long March leadership



ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, held an important meeting with the leadership of Servis Long March, including Chinese Chairman Jin Yongsheng and CEO Omar Saeed, on the eve of the Asian Financial Forum in Hong Kong.

According to press release issued by finance ministry here Sunday, during the meeting, Minister Aurangzeb emphasized the importance of establishing a favorable policy framework to enable Pakistani businesses to explore opportunities in interna-

tional equity capital markets.

He appreciated Servis Long March's intention to list on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange and assured the government of Pakistan's support not only for this listing but also for other companies pursuing international equity capital raising.

Chairman Jin Yongsheng and CEO Omar Saeed highlighted Servis Long March's growth trajectory and the potential benefits of listing on an international platform to access global capital markets.

The discussions also focused on the broader implications of this collab-

oration, emphasizing the need to enhance Pakistan's presence in international financial markets and attract foreign investment.

The meeting concluded with a mutual understanding of the need for continued dialogue and cooperation to address the complexities of international listings and capital raising.

The interaction between Finance Minister Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb and the Servis Long March leadership reflected a shared commitment to developing Pakistan's capital markets and strengthening the country's position in the global financial landscape.

# San Fernando Valley under threat as Los Angeles fire rages on

LOS ANGELES, Jan 12 (Reuters) - Firefighters were slowly making progress in their battle to contain the inferno that has razed swathes of Los Angeles' Pacific Palisades neighborhood to the ground, but still-spreading flames threatened communities in the populous San Fernando Valley on Sunday.

Aircraft dropped water and fire retardant on steep hills to stem the eastward spread of the Palisades Fire and KTLA television reported that ground crews had managed to save a number of houses, although others were lost.

"LA County had another night of unimaginable terror and heartbreak," Los Angeles County Supervisor Lindsey Horvath said.

Six simultaneous blazes that have ripped across the United States' second-largest city since Tuesday had killed at least 16 people as of late Saturday, the Washington Post and other media reported, citing the

Los Angeles County medical examiner's office. Reuters could not reach the coroner.

At least 13 people are estimated to be missing.

The blazes have damaged or destroyed 12,000 structures, fire officials said. The flames have reduced whole neighborhoods to smoldering ruins, destroying the homes of the rich and famous and ordinary folk alike and leaving an apocalyptic landscape.

Over the past 24 hours, the Palisades Fire spread over an additional 1,000 acres (400 hectares), consuming more homes, officials reported.

Cal Fire official Todd Hopkins said that while 11% of the Palisades Fire was now contained, it has burned more than 22,000 acres.

Hopkins told a press conference that fire had spread into the Mandeville Canyon and threatened to jump into Brentwood, an upscale neighborhood that is home to many celebri-



ties, and the San Fernando Valley. It also incited towards the north-south 405 freeway.

**SANTA WINDS**

Although the Santa Ana winds that have fanned the flames were calmer on Saturday, the National Weather Service warned that stronger gusts of up to 70 mph (110 kph) could return early next week.

Red Flag warnings remain in effect for L.A. and Ventura counties through to Wednesday, the NWS said.

"These winds, combined with dry air and dry vegetation, will keep the fire weather threat in the area," it said. Conditions were expected to moderate by Thursday.

On Saturday, some resi-

# 9 khwarij terrorists killed in North Waziristan: ISPR

### E.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: The Security Forces killed nine khwarij terrorists in two separate engagements on Saturday in North Waziristan districts.

"An intelligence based operation was conducted by the Security Forces in general area Dosalli, on reported presence of Khwarij.

During the conduct of operation, own troops effectively engaged the Khwarij location and resultantly, six Khwarij were sent to hell, while two Khwarij were apprehended," said an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release issued here Sunday.

Another intelligence based operation was conducted in general area Esham, North Waziristan District. After intense fire

exchange, three Khwarij were neutralised by security forces, while two Khwarij got injured.

Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from killed khwarij, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities against the security forces as well as target killing of innocent civilians.

"Sanitization operations are being conducted to eliminate any other kharij found in the area, as security forces of Pakistan are determined to wipe-out the menace of terrorism from the country," it further said.

**President pays tribute to security forces for successful operations against Fitna al-Khawarij**

President Asif Ali Zardari Sunday paid tribute to the security forces for their successful opera-

tions against Fitna al-Khawarij in North Waziristan.

He appreciated security forces for eliminating nine terrorists of Fitna al-Khawarij in two different operations.

He expressed determination to fully eliminate Fitna al-Khawarij from the country.

He said security forces were carrying out operations to eradicate the menace of terrorism, adding the whole nation was united against terrorism.

He said operations against Fitna al-Khawarij would continue till complete eradication of terrorism.

**PM hails security forces operation against Khawarij**

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has hailed officers and jawans of the security

forces for a successful operation carried out against Khawarij in North Waziristan.

Nine Khawarij (terrorists) were killed by the security forces in the latest action. In a laudatory message issued on Sunday, the premier paid glowing tribute to the security forces, saying the war would continue till complete annihilation of the demon of terrorism from the country.

He said the armed forces stand as iron wall in defence of the country against terrorists, adding that the people of Pakistan stand shoulder to shoulder with the security forces.

The premier said the officers and jawans were serving the country steadfastly day and night.

PM Shehbaz Sharif said the whole nation pays rich tribute to its valiant armed forces.

## No demand from US for relief to PTI founder: Khawaja Asif

ISLAMABAD (INP): Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has stated that the United States has made no demand to provide relief to the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan.

According to reports, Asif accused PTI of spreading false information and trying to damage Pakistan's reputation by wrongly linking their polit-

ical issues to the U.S Congress.

He criticized Imran Khan and PTI for shifting from their earlier "Absolutely Not" stance to "Absolutely Yes," saying this shows a complete change in their position.

He also accused PTI of staging fake dramas, including claims about congressional hearings, to gain public sympathy and

political advantage.

Referring to the events of May 9, Asif stated that PTI's efforts to create chaos and conspiracy have repeatedly failed, and accountability for those involved will continue.

He revealed that during a past protest, the PTI founder Imran Khan agreed to one plan, but Bushra Bibi pushed for a march toward D-Chowk instead.

Asif further blamed PTI for causing a deadlock in negotiations, saying they are not serious about talks. He added that the truth behind their political maneuvers will soon be exposed.

Pakistan's relationship with the U.S., he said, is built on 76 years of diplomacy and mutual interests, not on short-term political games.

## Arab, EU diplomats in Saudi for talks on support for Syria

RIYADH (AFP) : Top diplomats from the Middle East and Europe were arriving in the Saudi capital on Sunday to discuss Syria, as world powers push for stability after the fall of Bashar al-Assad.

Saudi Arabia, the Middle East's biggest economy, is seeking to increase its influence in Syria after Islamist-led rebels toppled Assad last month, analysts say.

The talks on Sunday will unfold in two sessions: the first will bring together Arab officials, while the second will feature wider participation, including from Turkey, France, the European Union and the United Nations, a Saudi official told AFP on Saturday.

Syria's new leader Ahmed al-Sharaa, who led the main rebel group in the alliance that overthrew Assad, is pushing for sanctions relief. Western powers, including the United States and the

European Union, imposed sanctions on Assad's government over his brutal crackdown on anti-government protests in 2011, which triggered the civil war.

More than 13 years of conflict have killed over half a million Syrians, left infrastructure destroyed and the people impoverished, while millions have fled their homes, including to Europe.

The European Union's top diplomat, Kaja Kallas, said on Friday that the 27-nation bloc could begin lifting sanctions if Syria's new rulers took steps to form an inclusive government that protected minorities.

Saudi Arabia cut ties with Assad's government in 2012 and had long openly championed his ouster. But in 2023 it hosted an Arab League meeting at which Assad was welcomed back into the regional fold.

This month the Gulf kingdom has sent food, shelter

and medical supplies to Syria over land and by plane.

Riyadh is now negotiating how to support the war-struck country's transition beyond that.

"This summit sends the message that Saudi Arabia wants to take the lead on coordinating the regional effort to support Syria's recovery," said Anna Jacobs, non-resident fellow at the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington.

"But the big question is how much time and how many resources will Saudi Arabia devote to this effort? And what is possible with many of the sanctions remaining in place?"

**Cautious approach**

The meetings on Sunday represent a continuation of talks on post-Assad Syria held last month in Jordan, the Saudi official said.

After those talks in Aqaba, diplomats called in a joint statement for a Syrian-

led transition to "produce an inclusive, non-sectarian and representative government formed through a transparent process".

The statement also stressed "respect for human rights" and the importance of combating "terrorism and extremism", demanding all parties cease hostilities in Syria.

Turkey's foreign minister had confirmed he would attend Sunday's meeting. Iraq's top diplomat was also in Riyadh for the gathering, and AFP saw Germany's foreign minister at the conference venue.

US Under Secretary of State John Bass is also set to attend, coming from talks in Turkey that partly covered "the importance of regional stability, preventing Syria from being used as a base for terrorism, and ensuring the enduring defeat" of the Islamic State group, the State Department said.

Angeles' history.

Officials have declared a public health emergency due to the thick, toxic smoke and poorer air quality, as the fires lofted traces of metals, plastics and other synthetic materials.

But progress was reported in bringing electrical power back to Los Angeles neighborhoods.

Southern California Edison CEO Steven Powell said there were now about 50,000 customers without power, down from more than half a million days earlier.

Private forecaster AccuWeather estimated the damage and economic loss at \$135 billion to \$150 billion, portending soaring homeowners' insurance costs.

In the Vatican, Pope Francis said in his weekly address to the faithful in St. Peter's Square: "I am close to the people of Los Angeles ... where devastating fires have broken out in recent days. I pray for all of you."





KARACHI: Senator Faisal Vawda addressing a press conference at Karachi Press Club. —APP Photo

## Release of Aafia Over one million people sign mercy petition

KARACHI (PPI): More than one million people have signed the mercy petition to the US president for release of Dr Aafia Siddiqui.

According to a statement issued from Aafia Movement office today, Aafia Movement leader and noted neurophysician of the country Dr Fowzia Siddiqui had appealed the people to send mercy petition to the outgoing US President for releasing Aafia Siddiqui on humanitarian grounds. Every outgoing US President has the power to grant mercy to prisoners as per the US law.

Dr Fowzia Siddiqui thanked the supporters of Dr Aafia for achieving the target of one million signatures. "We did it! Over one million signatures for Aafia's freedom." She said:

I'm overwhelmed with gratitude for each and every one of you who signed, shared, and prayed for Aafia's release. Your unwavering support has given support and the will to continue.

Dr Fowzia Siddiqui; however, said that this journey isn't over yet. "We still need your help to bring Aafia home. Please continue signing, sharing, and praying for her freedom, pray that your efforts bear fruit, and that we end this brutal injustice. I am sure if our petition gets to President Biden and he has the slightest of humanity, compassion, and sense of fairness, he will let Aafia go."

She said that the merit of her case is so strong. However, that is the hurdle. Please keep amplifying my and

Aafia Movement's voice until our beloved Aafia is back with her family, said Dr Fowzia Siddiqui. "Let us pray Our Lord paves our path and guides us and softens the hearts of the oppressors and wills it in President Biden's heart to do the right thing."

She urged the people to continue this drive till January 16 and also pray for Dr Aafia Siddiqui. She hoped that with the grace of Allah, the Almighty, Aafia Siddiqui would soon be released and rejoins family.

Once again thanking the supporters of Aafia, she said: Together, we will make a difference! Inn shaa Allah. You have given me the pride to tell the oppressors I am not alone but over a million great people stand by my side. Jazak Allah khair.

## PPP has bargained Sindh's resources in pursuit of power: PTI Sindh chief

KARACHI (PPI): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Sindh President Haleem Adil Sheikh said on Sunday that PPP had been looting Sindh's resources for 17 years.

"PPP has deprived the people of even basic facilities. In its quest for power, the PPP has orchestrated the plundering of Sindh's water," he said while addressed the media at Adil House in Karachi. Mr Sheikh emphasized that the ongoing awareness march from Hyderabad, led by the parties in the Save Sindhu River Movement, was gaining success. "We will inform the public about how the PPP is squandering Sindh's resources,"

Sheikh highlighted that while Sindh had already suffered from water scarcity, the PPP had now played a significant role in blocking the Indus river's water, further exacerbating the crisis. "After the destruction of education, healthcare, and infrastructure, the PPP has now played a part in shutting off Sindh's water," he added.

The PTI Sindh chief affirmed that PTI stood firmly by the people of Sindh and would not allow the usurpation of the province's water resources. Sheikh said that PPP had played a key role in six new canals project on the Sindhu River.

The people of Sindh were demanding accountability from the PPP, Sheikh said. "Despite billions in the provincial budget, basic facilities are still out of reach for the public." Sheikh also criticized the incumbent rulers, stating that due to their incompetence, inflation was at an all-time high. Furthermore, the prices of medicines had increased by 300%, further burdening the public. "The people are fed up with these corrupt rulers. Their time is running out, and soon, justice will prevail," he observed.

On the political front, Sheikh spoke about the ongoing oppression of PTI leaders, stating that the entire province of Sindh, like the rest of Pakistan, demands an explanation for why the use of force against them was necessary. "Why are we being subjected to restrictions and why are our workers, including Imran Khan, still not released?" Sheikh questioned, adding that Imran Khan, a great leader of the Muslim world, is currently imprisoned for the sake of the future of the nation's children. "We have endured a lot; we have been treated unjustly and have been subjected to terrorist-like treatment," he said.

"Despite Karachi is contributing 65% of the country's tax revenue and 90% of the province's revenue, its citizens are still deprived of basic facilities, including drinking water. The people of Karachi voted for PTI, but through a conspiracy and false claims in Form 47, our mandate was stolen," the PTI Sindh president concluded.

### Part of GT Road to be turned into a tourism corridor

LAHORE (APP): A plan to make the Quaid-e-Azam Interchange to Wagah Border GT Road a tourism corridor has been unveiled. The project worth Rs. 3.28 billion would be a new wide carpeted road with model structure fences. Furthermore, model carts will also be installed on both sides of the corridor-road.

The Tourism, Archaeology and Museums Department sources told APP that work on the project had been started by the C&W Department. The apex committee also discussed work on the project. The Punjab government has allocated Rs. 1 billion for the project this year. The project currently includes reconstruction of the specific part of the GT Road.

The artificial wall in the form of a fence will highlight the culture of Lahore. Those coming to the Wagah Border and those coming from India to Pakistan will get a tourist corridor. Encroachments and deteriorating condition of the road from Quaid-e-Azam Interchange to Wagah would be cleared completely. The Punjab govt, while following the vision of Punjab CM Maryam, has started Punjab Tourism for Economic Growth Project (PTEGP) to exploit the tourism potential in the province. Project Director Muhammad Waqas Malik told APP that the Punjab Tourism for Economic Growth Project aims to celebrate and rediscover Punjab's vibrant heritage.

## Media literacy vital to fight back disinformation

LAHORE (APP): Speakers stressed the need for promoting media literacy and fighting back disinformation, here on Sunday.

A panel discussion on 'Advancing Media Literacy and Rights Online-Offline' was held on the second and last day of ThinkFest 2025 at Alhamra here.

C o u n s e l l o r Political/Economic/Public Affairs High Commission of Canada in Pakistan Daniel Arsenaault said there was a need to equip young people with the skills to critically analyse information, disseminated by all types of media.

The best approach to tackle disinformation was by boosting media literacy, opting for empowerment rather than suppression, and critical assessment rather than censorship, he added.

Digital Rights Foundation Executive Director Nighat Dad and Journalist Asad Toor said, "As the information landscape becomes more complex, everyone needs robust skills to spot disinformation; the ability to identify sources and assess their credibility and cross-check information from multiple sources to understand the context in which information is produced."

Speakers said that disinformation was a broader challenge and comprehensive and holistic approach was required to tackle it. Media literacy was best imparted through the curriculum at primary, secondary and higher education levels, speakers added.

They said that education system must prepare the youth for effective and ethical engagement with digital media and new information technologies. Speakers concluded the debate saying it was high time to equip citizens with media and information literacy skills to eliminate extremism and hate speech.

## Secretary reviews Bulleh Shah shrine construction

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Auqaf Secretary Dr. Tahir Raza Bukhari reviewed construction project of Hazrat Baba Bulleh Shah shrine on Sunday.

He said after completion of the project, the best facilities would be provided to pilgrims.

The government was fulfilling its responsibility to improve infrastructure of shrines, he said adding that library and seminar hall at Bulleh Shah shrine would promote thought and art of the Sufi saint.

He said it was crucial to utilise the Sufi teachings to curb extremism. He said the officers concerned should monitor construction work on development projects at important shrines across the province on daily basis. Use of sub-standard material, construction contrary to the approved scheme and compromise on quality would not be allowed at any cost, he added.

He ordered for completion of Rs. 491 million development scheme of Bulleh Shah shrine in Kasur, which included upgradation and decoration of the shrine according to a special design, parking, seminar hall, library, 'Samaa' area, amphitheatre, admin block, wash rooms, lavatory block, 'langar khana', kitchen and other necessities and accessories as soon as possible.

Director Projects Auqaf Rafiq Noor Wattoo, Assistant Director Religious Affairs Hafiz Muhammad Javed Shaukat, Administrator Auqaf Lahore Zone (West) Ashfaq Dial, SDO, C&W Muhammad Zahid and Contractor Ali Raza and others were also present.

## Hajj 2025 preparations Ashrafi warns against misuse of pilgrimage opportunities

LAHORE (APP): Chairman of the Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC) Hafiz Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi announced on Sunday that booking process for private Hajj pilgrims had officially commenced from Friday.

He urged private organisations to ensure that beggars and drug-addicts were not sent to Saudi Arabia under the guise of pilgrimage.

Speaking at a press conference at the Lahore Press Club here, he said that Saudi Arabia began preparations for the upcoming Hajj immediately after conclusion of the previous one, reflecting their commitment to ensuring a smooth pilgrimage experience for all. He dismissed rumours about restrictions on Pakistani companies by Saudi authorities, affirming that no Pakistani organisation had been blacklisted. He clarified that overseas Pakistanis were welcome to perform Hajj alongside Pakistani groups.

Addressing a broader issue, Ashrafi condemned the Israeli map, labeling it as a representation of terrorism. "We are ready to sacrifice everything for Makkah Mukarrama and Madina Munawarra, and we outright reject the Israeli map," he declared.

The PUC chairman also stressed the importance of maintaining sanctity of Hajj and Umrah, ensuring that beggars did not misuse these spiritual journeys. "Large groups of beggars have been stopped from going to the holy land, and private organisations must remain vigilant," he said.

Ashrafi warned that no private entity was authorised to facilitate visas for beggars and promised strict action against any organisation found complicit in enabling the activities of the begging mafia. "If complaints against these groups are proven, there will be no forgiveness," he concluded.

## Governor's Summit: A symbol of unity, solidarity

KARACHI (APP): Governor Sindh, Kamran Khan Tessori, emphasized that the inaugural Governors' Summit will play a pivotal role in promoting national harmony.

Speaking at a grand dinner held at Governor House to conclude the historic event, he remarked that the Summit symbolizes unity, solidarity, and a commitment to collective progress.

The event was graced by the presence of former Governors Muhammad Zubair and Mian Muhammad Soomro, alongside Consul Generals from various countries, city elites, and prominent members of the business community.

Governor Kamran Khan Tessori presented commemorative souvenirs to the participating Governors, who praised the historic and dignified ambiance of Governor House.

The attendees lauded the Governor's hospitality and the successful organization of the Summit, highlighting it as a beacon of national solidarity and a testament to fostering harmony across various sectors of society.

## Fugitive arrested from South Africa

LAHORE (APP): On the instructions of Inspector General of Police Punjab, Dr. Usman Anwar, joint operations by Punjab Police and Interpol are ongoing, resulting in the arrest of another fugitive wanted for attempted murder case from abroad, who had been brought to Pakistan.

Police spokesperson said Punjab police arrested Arsalan Ashraf from South Africa. The fugitive had injured a citizen with the intent to kill and fled to South Africa. Arsalan Ashraf had been wanted by Wahndo Police Station, Gujranwala, for three years in an attempted murder case.

Punjab Police had issued red notices for the fugitive from the Interpol, and in close coordination with South African Police, arrested the fugitive and transferred him to Pakistan.

This marks the second fugitive arrested and brought to Pakistan from abroad in the first 11 days of this year. Last year, 104 fugitives wanted in serious crimes were arrested and brought back to Pakistan from abroad.

## CM okays Rs62 bln for Apni Chhat, Apna Ghar

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has approved a budget of 62 billion rupees for the "Apni Chhat, Apna Ghar" (Own Roof, Own House) program.

Chairing a special meeting on the program here on Sunday, she set a target of disbursing 40,000 loans by May, urging swift completion of the loan distribution process.

CM Maryam Nawaz also instructed the authorities concerned to review the proposal of increasing loan amounts from 1.5 million to 2 million rupees. The program aimed to provide financial assistance to underprivileged families in Punjab to help them own their homes.

The chief minister emphasized her desire for every homeless individual to have their own roof, declaring that owning a home is a fundamental right for every citizen. During the briefing, it was shared that around 5,000 people across Punjab have already availed loans under the program. Moreover, over 4,200 houses are rapidly progressing towards completion under the initiative.

Notably, the Ravi Urban Development Authority (RUDA) and Punjab Housing and Urban Development departments are collaborating to provide pre-built homes to deserving families as part of the initiative.

## Citizens hold demo against gas load shedding

KARACHI (PPI): Residents of Khairpur held a protest demonstration here on Sunday against the low pressure and load shedding of gas.

The citizen of Sirai Ghanwar Khan, Bachal Shah, Abid Colony, Altaf Colony, Shaheedabad, Munshi Mohalla, Jeelani Mohalla, and others of the city took to the streets and protested against gas authorities and chanted slogans against them.

The protesters said that in 80 neighborhoods of Khairpur, the pressure of gas during meal times had been not only lowered but sometimes, it had been nonexistent.

While protesting, the residents stated that they had submitted numerous requests to the Sui Gas Zonal Manager, and despite multiple visits to the office, the gas pressure was never restored. They claimed that for several years, millions of rupees allocated for the repair of gas lines in Khairpur had only been shown on paper, and under the leadership of the Zonal Manager, the gas staff had neither fixed the gas line leaks nor repaired the gas lines.

The residents also stated that the Sui gas staff in Khairpur had also ignored the orders of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who had instructed that gas be supplied to domestic consumers from 5 AM to 10 PM.

The residents demanded that the gas pressure be increased for domestic users and that the load shedding be stopped. They also called for an honest investigation into the funds allocated over the years and accountability for the incompetent staff of Sui gas in Khairpur to alleviate the hardships of the citizens.

## PJA conducts training workshops for lawyers

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Judicial Academy (PJA), in collaboration with the International Mediation and Arbitration Centre (ICDRI), under the Ministry of Law and Justice, has successfully conducted a two-day training workshop for lawyers on the topic of mediation and alternative dispute resolution (ADR).

The workshop concluded on Sunday and featured insightful lectures by prominent figures, including the Director (L&M), Director ICDRI, CEO ADR International Mediator, and CAO World Bank. A total of 30 lawyers participated in the workshop, gaining valuable knowledge about mediation practices.

In addition to this, a six-day training course on the judicial analysis of revenue documents for judges of the district judiciary also concluded at the academy. The session was chaired by the Director General of Punjab Judicial Academy, Mr. Justice (Retd.) Sardar Ahmad Naeem, and was attended by key academy officials, including Advisor and Director Admin Hafeez Ullah Khan, Director Program Mansoor Ahmad Khan, Director Research Bushra Zaman, Director Training Irum Ayaz, and senior instructors Mahmood Azam, Ayesha Khalid, and Muhammad Khalid Khan.

While addressing the participants, Mr. Justice (Retd.) Sardar Ahmad Naeem emphasized the importance of continuous learning and professional development for judicial officers. He stated that judges, being custodians of justice, have the primary responsibility to ensure fair and timely justice.

He highlighted the academy's commitment to equipping judicial officers with modern skills and knowledge, particularly in the analysis of revenue documents, through practical and effective training programs led by expert instructors and resource persons.

The six-day training on revenue documents was attended by civil judges, senior civil judges, and additional session judges. Participants appreciated the academy's efforts to improve their practical understanding of revenue-related matters.

Meanwhile, the two-day ADR workshop for lawyers was praised for its focus on alternative dispute resolution techniques. Advocate General Punjab, Khalid Ishaq, addressed the participants during the concluding session, emphasizing the significance of ADR in reducing the burden on the judiciary and promoting amicable dispute resolution.

The Punjab Judicial Academy reaffirmed its dedication to providing high-quality training programs tailored to meet the evolving needs of the judicial system, encouraging feedback and suggestions from stakeholders to further enhance its initiatives.



LAHORE: A large number of people on Nicholson Road near the Orange Line Train Station to buy warm clothes as temperatures drop in the City. —APP Photo



# Several DSPs, SHOs suspended, officers demoted and dismissed

ISLAMABAD (APP): In the past week, Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police has implemented strong accountability measures, leading to the questioning of four Deputy Superintendents of Police (DSPs), the suspension of four Station House Officers (SHOs), and the demotion or dismissal of several officers.

This action, spearheaded by Inspector General (IG) Islamabad Syed Ali Nasser Rizvi, also included the dismissal of a Dolphin Unit official for bribery and the removal of the Principal of the Capital Police College from his position.

A police spokesperson told APP that both senior and junior officers faced strict disciplinary actions.

He said four DSPs were called to provide explanations, and inquiries were initiated. An Inspector was dismissed for neglecting duties, while two inspectors from the Dolphin Unit and a clerk were demoted by one rank. Additionally, an Anti-Riot Unit clerk was also demoted by one rank.

The accountability continued with the suspension of four SHOs due to their failure to manage crime effectively. These included Ashfaq Warraich from the Secretariat Police Station, Sharafat Ali from Noon Police Station, Muhammad Yousuf from Shams Colony Police Station, and Irshad Ahmed from Sabzi Mandi Police Station.

An official told APP the SHO from Noon Police Station faced the confiscation of three years of service and one year of promotion suspension, while the others had their services confiscated for two years.

The Principal of the Capital Police College was removed from his position and reassigned to "desk duty" at the Central Police Office (CPO).

Further, Dolphin Unit official Hassan Maqsood was dismissed after being found guilty of accepting a bribe and allowing a vehicle with tinted windows to pass unchecked during a routine check. His dismissal followed an inquiry triggered by a complaint from a fellow officer.

Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) Islamabad, Syed Ali Raza, emphasized that the department will not tolerate corruption or negligence. He stated, "There is no room for corrupt officers in the department. Any officer who oversteps their authority or neglects their duties will face strict legal and departmental actions."

Naqvi paid tribute to martyr traffic policeman

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi on Sunday paid homage to Traffic Police personnel Zubair Shah, who was martyred in a firing incident by unidentified assailants in Sector I-9, in the federal capital.

In a statement, the minister expressed his heartfelt condolence to the bereaved family, saying, "We stand with the grieving family in this hour of sorrow." He also urged for the immediate arrest of the culprits, directing authorities to bring them to justice swiftly and ensure that Zubair Shah's family receives justice.

## Minister stresses need for action

ISLAMABAD (INP): Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training, Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui emphasised the need for collective action to overcome the barriers to girls' education, underscoring the importance of education in empowering women and strengthening communities.

Speaking at the closing ceremony of global conference on "Girls' Education in Muslim Society: Challenges and Opportunities" on Sunday, the minister reiterated his commitment as education minister to ensure that every child in Pakistan, regardless of gender, socio-economic background, or geographical location, has access to quality education. "Addressing educational disparities remains a top priority for the government as education plays a vital role in empowering girls, in their prosperity, development and well-being," the minister added.

Expressing concern over the persistent opposition to girls' education, the minister called on the nation to unite in challenging these entrenched societal norms and attitudes.



# PAKISTAN AIR FORCE

## OPEN TENDER NOTICES

SEALED TENDERS ARE INVITED BY THE FOLLOWING BASES / UNITS FOR THE SUPPLY / PURCHASE / REPAIR / OVERHAULING OF MENTIONED ITEMS.

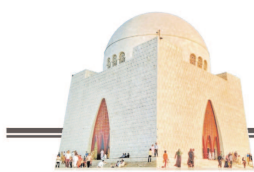
DP AIR C/O PAF BASE NUR KHAN RAWALPINDI							NO 107 AED PAF BASE FAISAL (LOG)		021-99547321		PAF BASE, SAKESAR (KHUSHAB)		048-3722299							
S. NO	IT No.	Description of Stores	No of Line Item	U/I, Qty	CAT	Opening Date	Time Period for Performance of Contract	Closing + Opening Time	Following items are required to be repaired / upgraded through Open Tender: 6125PK0006516 Superseder Battery Charger or equivalent, Scope of Work: Repair / Upgraded of Nextek Universal Battery Charger Controller Card, 6350PK1030120 X-Ray Generator 140KVA (Commercial Part No TA55130MC Make Rapiscan or equivalent), Scope of Work: Replacement of X-Ray Tube, Capacitor Bank, High-voltage diodes, Transformer and Transformer Oil or equivalent, Following items are required to be purchased through Open Tender: HG1214AFCS-3 Auto Iris Lens 12 MM (Commercial Part No HG1214AFCS-3 or equivalent), RV-CAM-HD19 or equivalent, HD-19 Micro Bullet Camera (Commercial Part No RV-CAM-HD19 or equivalent), 5962PK0019472 Quintenz Video Distributor IC (Commercial Part No MSK620B [Mil Grade] or equivalent), 5962PK0019475 HD-19 Lens 10MM (Commercial Part No P000001482047- 23312 or equivalent), 5962PK0019474 RF Transistor 500W (Commercial Part No DME-500 or equivalent), 5962PK0019473 RF Transistor NPN 700W (Commercial Part No BLA0912 or equivalent), 5962PK0019477 Cable Assembly Rigid Flex or equivalent, FED 400 Drying Oven, 6625NL-0276970000 CPU BOARD (Synthesized single Generator or equivalent), 120-08011-0000 LSI DME Range CKT (KTU-709 Transceiver or equivalent), 5820NL-1146.3100.03 Analogue Audio Board (UPV Audio Analyzer) or equivalent, 5961NL-EL415- 20449308501MXC Latching Relay or equivalent, KW-ML- 4-214S 7 Segment Display (Multi Digit) (Fuel Flow Ind) or equivalent, 5962-9308501MXC EE PLD Programmable Logic D or equivalent, 6625PK0217401 Module (RF/1F) (Handheld Spectrum Analyzer) or equivalent, 6350/PK- HP-PLC01 Mini PLC Interface Board (X-Ray Baggage Scanning Machine) or equivalent, 6350/PK-BH-DIOT3 X-Daq Enet Diode Interface Board (X-Ray Baggage Scanning Machine) or equivalent, 5805NL-6001-963 Filter Block Assy (Ventilator) or equivalent, 6625NL- 84102912 Fluorescent Tube Blue (Infant Warmer) or equivalent, 6625NL- 1556880 Interface Board (Infant Incubator) or equivalent, 6625PK021799 Sys Board 50 MHZ (Infant Incubator) or equivalent, 6515PK0017322 DUU Board D950 (Multiparameter Monitor) or equivalent, 6515PK0017464 Controller PCB (Infant Warmer) or equivalent, 6625NL-M100 Rechargeable Battery (Anesthesia Work Station), 6625NL- 299052 Filter or equivalent, 6515PK0289418 Power-2002 Assy PH (Ventilator) or equivalent, 6515PK0289392 Power Supply Unit Assy (Infant Incubator) or equivalent, 6625NL- 01.02.008.012 Drive Board Assy (Infusion Pump) or equivalent, 6625PK027129 Control Board (Yag Ophthalmic Laser) or equivalent, 6625PK0217128 D100 Board or equivalent, 6625NL-A0101-SB01 Ultrasound Probe, 6515PK0017696 Incubator Filter (Infant Incubator) or equivalent, 6625PK0217060 Main Board (Anesthesia Work Station or equivalent), 6625NL-014-1-0026-ECurrent Power Amplifire (Electro Surgical Unit) or equivalent, 6625NL- 41615-71000 Control PCB Unit (Infant Incubator) or equivalent, 6625NL-NU-53001 Air Regulator Assy (Ventilator) or equivalent, 6515PK0289361 Patient Probe (CTG Machine) or equivalent, H1608 IC, HTCC-220V Ceramic Heater Element or equivalent, H1616 IC or equivalent, JT1 Electrical Flight Timer or equivalent, 6625PK0217408 Card Oscillator or equivalent, 5805PK0017383 DC Card (AC) or equivalent, 110D/1ARD- R60C471K97 Metal Oxide Varistor ZNR 3-5 or equivalent, 5805NL/ AUTOMAG- MGT-412 PCB Magento Board, 5820NL-GPS 170 Satellite Receiver or equivalent, <b>Note:-</b> Separate technical & financial quotation is required for each single line item, Validity of offer must be 90 days, Warranty period should be clearly mentioned on quotation, For further technical information, specification and company make, model, please contact Tele No. 021-99547321, 021-99547397											
CORRIGENDUM OF ENTRIES PUBLISHED IN NEWSPAPERS / PPRA WEBSITE																				
S. NO	IT NO.	Description of Stores	Amendment in Opening Date		PUBLISHED IN NEWSPAPERS		REMARKS													
			FOR	READ																
1	424566/P-42 (Extension)	Proc & Installation of AFLS (App Light Cat-II) for Instruments Runway 06R & Reils at PAF Base MM Alam	07-01-25	22-01-25	Daily "Pakistan Observer" & "K-2" Dated 23-12-24		Opening Date Extended													
2	424567/P-42 (Extension)	Proc & Installation of AFLS (App Light Cat-II) for Instruments Runway 14L at PAF Base Murid	07-01-25	22-01-25																
3	436995/P-43 (Extension)	Proc of Spares for PAR System	02-01-25	16-01-25																
4	437012/P-43 (Extension)	Proc of Enhancement of PAF Secure-Net Architecture at PAF Bases	06-01-25	16-01-25																
3	467275/P-46 (Extension)	Sunglasses	08-01-25	22-01-25																
4	467300/P-46 (Extension)	Diesel Fuel and Petrol	08-01-25	16-01-25	Daily "The Nation" & "Ausa" Dated 30-12-24															
5	467309/P-46	Track Suit	Opening date 20-01-25	Qty= 15000 PR	Daily "The Nation" & "Ausa" Dated 06-01-25		Quantity = 5100 PR was published in Newspaper, Erroneously													
1. Instructions / Guidelines for participating in Tenders as per the prescribed SBD and complete specifications can be downloaded from PAF website i.e. www.paf.gov.pk under the heading "Media" "PAF Ads" "General Instructions DP (Air Suppliers" (for guidelines to participate in tenders) and "Latest Advertisement" (for tender Invitation documents)																				
2. If Required ITS not found on PAF Website, concerned ADsP may be approached via request letter through e-mail address to (pa05@paf.gov.pk).																				
3. Firms, un-registered/un-indexed with DGDP interested to participate in the competition on Earnest Money are required to provide financial capability (minimum 6 months Bank Statements) proof of godown and manufacturer / stockist, 02 photocopies of NIC of the owner in case of FOR tenders and agency agreement with OEM along with the request. Request for issuance of IT will be entertained 07 days before opening date of tender.																				
4. A treasury Challan of Rs 2,000/- debitable to Main Head XLVII Main Head XII Sub Head A is required to be submitted by the un-registered/un-indexed firms along with the request.																				
5. Tender Notice is also available on PPRA website i.e. www.ppra.org.pk.																				
NO 103 ALC, PAF NUR KHAN (LOG)			081-952-7081		PAF BASE ISLAMABAD (LOG)			051-9505556												
491 .007 Pin, 492.005 Pin, 452.026 Soldering Ring, 452.24 Soldering Ring, 3002A-5-12182AT-IKD Bolt, 0,5-6-10-KD-OCT134505-80 Washer, 1-6-12-KD-OCT.1 Washer, 1-8-12-O-OCT-134505-80 Washer, H8T226-18x1.5 Packing Cap, 1.6x9.35WIETY-100/7-7 Needle Rolor, 2609052-13-2-Sealing Ring, 443.018 Coiled Spring, 5-60KOETY-100/7-11 Ball, 212.001 Ring, 212.002 Ring, 8187A.181 Washer (Ea As Req), For any query or additional information, please contact Tele No. 081-952-7081-82					VHF/UHF Antenna, Low Noise Amplifier (LNA), S-Band RF Amplifier, Drive USB Flash, 12 V DC Power Supply, RF Cable – SMA TO SMA, 2 Way L-Band Passive Splitter, ESD Wrist Band, ESD Gloves, ESD Apron, UHF Filter, UHF Antenna, UHF Amplifier, VHF Antenna, Band Pass Filter, Flir Pan Tilt Unit, Blade RF SDR, Hack RF SW DEF RAD (SDR), S-Band Patch Antenna (As Req), Note:- Separate Quotation (Technical and Financial) for each line item is required), For details / specifications / scope of work please contact Log Sqn on Mobile No: 0323-9408714, Phone No: 051-9505556, Email: Lsaq05@Paf.gov.Pk															
PAF BASE RISALPUR (LOG)			091-9503867		PAF BASE MUSHAF SARGODHA (LOG)			048-555-2278												
Nut (Part No 531 0012666931) (200 Ea), Packing Washer (Part No 5330000039301) (200 Ea), Hydraulic Trolley, Rotary Slasher (As Req), For Specifications/ scope of work any other query please Contact No Ext 3885, Mobile No: 0324-3189565					Local Repair of MRI System (SOW: Repair of Gradient Power Supply for GE 1.5T MRI Machine), Local Purchase of Differential & Planetary Oil, Transmission Oil (CD or ATF), Hyd Oil (ISO VG 46) (Ea As Req), Detailed Specifications can be obtained from Log Sqn Mushaf (Sargodha) on telephone 048-555-2278, Quantity of items can be increased or decreased as per requirement															
PAF BASE LAHORE (LOG)			Tele Ext 5235																	
Local Purchase of Batteries for X-Ray Detector Machine (As Required)																				

http://www.paf.gov.pk

### TERMS AND CONDITIONS:-

- General terms and conditions are mentioned in tender form (F-528A). Forms and tender notices complete details can be downloaded from PAF website "**www.paf.gov.pk**" or can be obtained from respective Bases/ Log Sqns on working days.
- The firm must be GST and professional Tax registered having NTN.
- Last date of submission of tenders: **28 JANUARY, 2025 (1000 hrs)**.
- Tenders will be opened on the same day at 1100 hours.
- No advance payment will be made and payment will be subject to acceptance of the items by user activity.
- Officers Commanding of the mentioned Bases/ Units reserve the right to reject any part or the entire tender on technical grounds.
- Quotations must be valid for 90 days.
- Sales Tax as applicable must be mentioned separately.
- Guarantee / Warranty term / period should also be mentioned.
- The agreement will be governed by official secret act. 1923.





# Foreign investment to be encouraged in Pakistan

KARACHI (APP): Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh has said that foreign investment would be encouraged in Pakistan, the investment of \$25 million from friendly country Denmark is a sign of confidence. He expressed these remarks while addressing a ceremony at a local hotel after the inauguration of the International Cargo Terminal Private Limited established in Port Qasim.

On this occasion, Danish Ambassador to Pakistan Jakob Linulf, ICT Senior Vice President Syed Imdad Hussain Jafri, Managing Director Asim Saeed

Khan, Morten Jaepelt, and others also spoke. Shields were presented to the chief guest and others in the ceremony.

The Federal Minister said that 90 percent of goods in Pakistan are being transported by sea, which is why Pakistan is of great importance to the region. He said that Central Asian countries can use Pakistan's sea route for their trade, Port Qasim is an institution that earned an income of Rs 42 billion last year and under the guidance of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the government was working day and night to improve the country's economy.

"Today the 4,000 container capacity has been converted to 22,000 containers, we want Gwadar Port to have a 60 percent share in Pakistan's import and export", Sheikh said, adding that in the coming time, 500 ships may come to Gadani for scrapping.

The Danish Ambassador Jakob Linulf, said that the International Cargo Terminal project is an example of long-standing friendship and trust between the two countries, we will invest more in the future.

Syed Imdad Hussain Jafri and MD ICT Asim Saeed Khan also spoke on the occasion.

## Governor Kundi calls on Asifa Bhutto

KARACHI (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faissal Karim Kundi met with Pakistan's First Lady, Member of National Assembly, and Polio Eradication Ambassador, Asifa Bhutto Zardari. The meeting focused on discussing the issues facing Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly the law and order situation and the growing number of polio cases.

Concerns were raised regarding the provincial government's lack of interest in resolving public issues, especially in tackling the increasing cases of polio. The meeting also deliberated on the proposal to develop a comprehensive strategy under the supervision of the Governor's House to address this issue.

Asifa Bhutto Zardari praised Governor Faissal Karim Kundi for his efforts to implement initiatives aligned with the vision of Benazir Bhutto, particularly in promoting women empowerment, youth engagement and interfaith harmony from the Governor's House in Peshawar.

# Summit to play pivotal role in promoting national harmony

KARACHI (PPI): Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori has emphasized that the inaugural Governors' Summit will play a pivotal role in promoting national harmony.

According to a statement issued today, speaking at a grand dinner held at Governor House to conclude the historic event, he remarked that the Summit symbolizes unity, solidarity, and a commitment to collective progress.

The event was graced by the presence of former Governors Muhammad Zubair and Mian Muhammad Soomro, alongside

Consul Generals from various countries, city elites, and prominent members of the business community.

Governor Kamran Khan Tessori presented commemorative souvenirs to the participating Governors, who praised the historic and dignified ambiance of Governor House.

The attendees lauded the Governor's hospitality and the successful organization of the Summit, highlighting it as a beacon of national solidarity and a testament to fostering harmony across various sectors of society.



# PAKISTAN AIR FORCE OPEN TENDER NOTICES

SEALED TENDERS ARE INVITED BY THE FOLLOWING BASES / UNITS FOR THE SUPPLY / PURCHASE / REPAIR / OVERHAULING OF MENTIONED ITEMS.

### DP AIR C/O PAF BASE NUR KHAN RAWALPINDI

S. NO	IT No.	Description of Stores	No of Line Item	U/I, Qty	CAT	Opening Date	Time Period for Performance of Contract	Closing + Opening Time
1	415236/P-41	Procurement of XD/XF items for C-130 Aircraft	03	EA-Var	FE	11-02-25	Within 06 Months after signing of the contract	1000 Hrs 1030 Hrs
2	437027/P-43	Proc of Sky guard DSI Setup	01	EA-01	Pak Rs	28-01-25	Within 08 Months after signing of the contract	1000 Hrs 1030 Hrs
3	437028/P-43	Proc of SDR for Blk-III / DS	01	EA-03	Pak Rs	28-01-25	Within 08 Months after signing of the contract	1100 Hrs 1130 Hrs
4	437029/P-43	Proc of Sky guard Link Management & Control center	01	EA-01	Pak Rs	28-01-25	Within 08 Months after signing of the contract	1200 Hrs 1230 Hrs
5	437002/P-43 (Re-Tender) {S No 08 & 09 only}	Proc of NGN, AGG, Access switches, ONTs and Routers Modules for Existing NGN Setups Including 02 Services	02	EA-Var	Pak Rs	29-01-25	Within 06 Months after signing of the contract	1000 Hrs 1030 Hrs
6	436991/P-43 (Re-Tender) {S No 05 Only}	Proc of Spares for HZN	01	EA-Var	Pak Rs	29-01-25	Within 08 Months after signing of the contract	1100 Hrs 1130 Hrs
7	448403/P-44 (Re-Tender)	Micro Bus	01	EA-15	Pak Rs	29-01-25	As soon as possible but not later than 30th June, 2025	1200 Hrs 1230 Hrs
8	448424/P-44	Motor Cycle 125 CC	01	EA-101	Pak Rs	29-01-25	As soon as possible but not later than 30th June, 2025	1200 Hrs 1230 Hrs
9	459766/P-45 (Re-Tender)	Photo Digital Camera with Accessory	01	EA-Var	Pak Rs	28-01-25	Within 18 Months after signing of contract	1030 Hrs 1100 Hrs
10	467314/P-46	Net Camouflage 36X36 Feet	01	EA-740	Pak Rs	29-01-25	Within 06 Months after signing of contract	1000 Hrs 1030 Hrs
11	467315/P-46	Dye Smoke (Green 251B)	01	LB-24212	FE	18-02-25	31 July, 2025	1000 Hrs 1030 Hrs

Contact Person / Ph No for Detail: For S. No 1 ADP-41 (051-9281361), For S. No 2 to 6 ADP-43 (051-9527715), For S. No 7 & 8 ADP-44 (051-9281366), For S. No 9 ADP-45 (051-9281365), For S. No 10 & 11 ADP-46 (051-9281366)

### CORRIGENDUM OF ENTRIES PUBLISHED IN NEWSPAPERS / PPRA WEBSITE

S. NO	IT NO.	Description of Stores	Amendment in Opening Date		PUBLISHED IN NEWSPAPERS	REMARKS
			FOR	READ		
1	424566/P-42 (Extension)	Proc & Installation of AFLS (App Light Cat-II) for Instruments Runway 06R & Reils at PAF Base MM Alam	07-01-25	22-01-25	Daily "Pakistan Observer" & "K-2" Dated 23-12-24	Opening Date Extended
2	424567/P-42 (Extension)	Proc & Installation of AFLS (App Light Cat-II) for Instruments Runway 14L at PAF Base Murid	07-01-25	22-01-25		
3	436995/P-43 (Extension)	Proc of Spares for PAR System	02-01-25	16-01-25		
4	437012/P-43 (Extension)	Proc of Enhancement of PAF Secure-Net Architecture at PAF Bases	06-01-25	16-01-25		
3	467275/P-46 (Extension)	Sunglasses	08-01-25	22-01-25		
4	467300/P-46 (Extension)	Diesel Fuel and Petrol	08-01-25	16-01-25	Daily "The Nation" & "Ausa" Dated 30-12-24	
5	467309/P-46	Track Suit	Opening date 20-01-25	Qty= 15000 PR	Daily "The Nation" & "Ausa" Dated 06-01-25	Quantity = 5100 PR was published in Newspaper, Erroneously

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- If Required ITS not found on PAF Website, concerned ADsP may be approached via request letter through e-mail address to (pa05@paf.gov.pk).
- Firms, un-registered/un-indexed with DGDP interested to participate in the competition on Earnest Money are required to provide financial capability (minimum 6 months Bank Statements) proof of godown and manufacturer / stockist, 02 photocopies of NIC of the owner in case of FOR tenders and agency agreement with OEM along with the request. Request for issuance of IT will be entertained 07 days before opening date of tender.
- A treasury Challan of Rs 2,000/- debitable to Main Head XLVII Main Head XII Sub Head A is required to be submitted by the un-registered/un-indexed firms along with the request.
- Tender Notice is also available on PPRA website i.e. www.ppra.org.pk.

### NO 103 ALC. PAF NUR KHAN (LOG) 081-952-7081

491 .007 Pin, 492.005 Pin, 452.026 Soldering Ring, 452.24 Soldering Ring, 3002A-5-12182AT-IKD Bolt, 0.5-6-10-KD-OCT134505-80 Washer, 1-6-12-KD-OCT.1 Washer, 1-8-12-O-OCT-134505-80 Washer, H8T226-18x1.5 Packing Cap, 1.6x9.35WIETY-100/7-7 Needle Rolor, 2609c52-13-2 Sealing Ring, 443.018 Coiled Spring, 5-60KOETY-100/7-11 Ball, 212.001 Ring, 212.002 Ring, 8187A.181 Washer (Ea As Req), For any query or additional information, please contact Tele No. 081-952-7081-82

### PAF BASE RISALPUR (LOG) 091-9503867

Nut (Part No 531 0012666931) (200 Ea), Packing Washer (Part No 5330000039301) (200 Ea), Hydraulic Trolley, Rotary Slasher (As Req), For Specifications/ scope of work any other query please Contact No Ext 3885, Mobile No: 0324-3189565

### PAF HOSPITAL LAHORE (LOG) Tele Ext 5235

Local Purchase of Batteries for X-Ray Detector Machine (As Required)

### PAF BASE ISLAMABAD (LOG) 051-9505556

VHF/UHF Antenna, Low Noise Amplifier (LNA), S-Band RF Amplifier, Drive USB Flash, 12 V DC Power Supply, RF Cable - SMA TO SMA, 2 Way L-Band Passive Splitter, ESD Wrist Band, ESD Gloves, ESD Apron, UHF Filter, UHF Antenna, UHF Amplifier, VHF Antenna, Band Pass Filter, Flir Pan Tilt Unit, Blade RF SDR, Hack RF SW DEF RAD (SDR), S-Band Patch Antenna (As Req), Note:- Separate Quotation (Technical and Financial) for each line item is required), For details / specifications / scope of work please contact Log Sqn on Mobile No: 0323-9408714, Phone No: 051-9505556, Email: Lsaq05@Paf.gov.Pk

### PAF BASE MUSHAF SARGODHA (LOG) 048-555-2278

Local Repair of MRI System (SOW: Repair of Gradient Power Supply for GE 1.5T MRI Machine), Local Purchase of Differential & Planetary Oil, Transmission Oil (CD or ATF), Hyd Oil (ISO VG 46) (Ea As Req), Detailed Specifications can be obtained from Log Sqn Mushaf (Sargodha) on telephone 048-555-2278, Quantity of items can be increased or decreased as per requirement

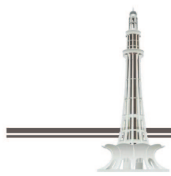
### PAF BASE SHAHBAZ (LOG) 0722-670454

Sensor Cell (Oxygen) for Ventilator, Oto Endoscope (Rigid Endoscopes 0.30, 45, 70, 90 With All Accessories), Rigid Ventilating Bronchoscope with Forceps (All Sizes), Esophagoscope Rigid, Hyd Bar/Boom Barrier 16 FT, Electro Hydraulic Barrier 16 FT, Delivery Table, Batteries (All Types), Technical & commercial quotations must be packed separately and sealed properly, Specs may be obtained from Log Sqn at 0323-9439712, 0309-8925565 & Office No 0722-670454 Ext 2257

### TERMS AND CONDITIONS:-

- General terms and conditions are mentioned in tender form (F-528A). Forms and tender notices complete details can be downloaded from PAF website "www.paf.gov.pk" or can be obtained from respective Bases/ Log Sqns on working days.
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- Guarantee / Warranty term / period should also be mentioned.
- The agreement will be governed by official secret act. 1923.





# CM directs to provide tractors, seeds to farmers

LAHORE (INP): Senior Provincial Minister Maryam Aurangzeb presided over a meeting on Sunday to review the progress of different ministries and their affiliated organisations in Punjab.

Maryam Aurangzeb said that Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz directed to provide 10,000 tractors and 2,000 super seeds to farmers till February 25, 2025.

The meeting was attended by Chairman Planning and Development Nabeel Ahmed Awan, Asif Tufail,

and other relevant secretaries. The participants of the meeting reviewed progress on various projects announced by Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz during the last six months.

The meeting decided to expedite and expand the provision of a free solar panel scheme. The meeting directed to complete the installation of solar panels in government buildings by June 2025.

Senior Provincial Minister directed to launch an exemplary agriculture programme in

Punjab for restore and promote citrus fruits.

He said that the Punjab government will provide all necessary facilities to farmers to enhance production and increase exports. The meeting decided to allocate Rs 6 billion extra funds for promotion of solar systems in the province while work on electricity generation through garbage will be completed soon.

He said that farmers of the province already obtained 5,000 Kissan Cards, while research work

will be concluded through universities.

Maryam Aurangzeb informed the participants that Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz had already been directed to complete the “Garments Centre” project by March this year.

The senior minister said that an industrial park and technology park will be established in Narowal on an area of 300 acres of land and a technology university in Kasur. She further directed to complete feasibility reports of both projects.

## One lawyer injured

LAHORE (INP): Lahore police arrested more than 50 lawyers who were involved in aerial firing after victory in the annual elections of the Lahore Bar Association (LBA).

PTI leader Hammid Khan’s group made a comeback with revenge; with his and PTI’s support, Mubashir Rehman manages to win the Lahore Bar Association presidential elections and becomes the president.

Mozang police also registered a case on behalf of SHO. Most of the lawyers were later released after submitting surety bonds. Saleem, Khizer Hayat, Sheheryar, Zahid, Rizwan, and Sufiyan were nominated in the FIR. Lawyer injured during celebratory firing in Faisalabad.

In a separate incident, one person was injured during aerial firing by lawyers in Summundi, Faisalabad. A man who was identified as Mohammad Safiyan received bullet injuries in his leg.

Police sources said that the injured Safiyan was also involved in the illegal act of aerial firing after the district bar’s elections. Faisalabad police registered a case against 14 unidentified persons and started an investigation.

## Apni Chhat, Apna Ghar scheme: CM allocates Rs62b

LAHORE (INP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has approved Rs62 billion in funds for the “Apni Chhat, Apna Ghar” program.

According to the report, the initiative aims to provide affordable housing to deserving individuals, with a target of disbursing loans to 40,000 beneficiaries by May 2025.

Chairing a special meeting on the housing scheme, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif directed officials to expedite the loan disbursement process and consider increasing the loan amount to Rs 2 million. Maryam Nawaz emphasised that providing every citizen with a home is a fundamental

right.

During the briefing, it was revealed that 5,000 citizens have already availed loans under the program, while over 4,200 homes are nearing completion.

The scheme, in collaboration with the Ravi Urban Development Authority (RUDA) and the Housing and Urban Development Department, will also provide ready-made homes to underprivileged families.

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif reiterated her commitment to ensuring that no family in Punjab remains homeless, stating, “A home is every citizen’s basic right.”



# PAKISTAN AIR FORCE

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SEALED TENDERS ARE INVITED BY THE FOLLOWING BASES / UNITS FOR THE SUPPLY / PURCHASE / REPAIR / OVERHAULING OF MENTIONED ITEMS.

DP AIR C/O PAF BASE NUR KHAN RAWALPINDI							NO 107 AED PAF BASE FAISAL (LOG)		021-99547321		PAF BASE, SAKESAR (KHUSHAB)		048-3722299							
S. NO	IT No.	Description of Stores	No of Line Item	U/I, Qty	CAT	Opening Date	Time Period for Performance of Contract	Closing + Opening Time	Following items are required to be repaired / upgraded through Open Tender: 6125PK0006516 Superseder Battery Charger or equivalent, Scope of Work: Repair / Upgraded of Nextek Universal Battery Charger Controller Card, 6350PK1030120 X-Ray Generator 140KVA (Commercial Part No TA55130MC Make Rapiscan or equivalent), Scope of Work: Replacement of X-Ray Tube, Capacitor Bank, High-voltage diodes, Transformer and Transformer Oil or equivalent, Following items are required to be purchased through Open Tender: HG1214AFCS-3 Auto Iris Lens 12 MM (Commercial Part No HG1214AFCS-3 or equivalent), RV-CAM-HD19 or equivalent, HD-19 Micro Bullet Camera (Commercial Part No RV-CAM-HD19 or equivalent), 5962PK0019472 Quintenz Video Distributor IC (Commercial Part No MSK620B [Mil Grade] or equivalent), 5962PK0019475 HD-19 Lens 10MM (Commercial Part No P000001482047- 23312 or equivalent), 5962PK0019474 RF Transistor 500W (Commercial Part No DME-500 or equivalent), 5962PK0019473 RF Transistor NPN 700W (Commercial Part No BLA0912 or equivalent), 5962PK0019477 Cable Assembly Rigid Flex or equivalent, FED 400 Drying Oven, 6625NL-0276970000 CPU BOARD (Synthesized single Generator or equivalent), 120-08011-0000 LSI DME Range CKT (KTU-709 Transceiver or equivalent), 5820NL-1146.3100.03 Analogue Audio Board (UPV Audio Analyzer) or equivalent, 5961NL-EL415- 20449308501MXC Latching Relay or equivalent, KW-ML- 4-214S 7 Segment Display (Multi Digit) (Fuel Flow Ind) or equivalent, 5962-9308501MXC EE PLD Programmable Logic D or equivalent, 6625PK0217401 Module (RF/1F) (Handheld Spectrum Analyzer) or equivalent, 6350/PK- HP-PLC01 Mini PLC Interface Board (X-Ray Baggage Scanning Machine) or equivalent, 6350/PK-BH-DIOT3 X-Daq Enet Diode Interface Board (X-Ray Baggage Scanning Machine) or equivalent, 5805NL-6001-963 Filter Block Assy (Ventilator) or equivalent, 6625NL- 84102912 Fluorescent Tube Blue (Infant Warmer) or equivalent, 6625NL- 1556880 Interface Board (Infant Incubator) or equivalent, 6625PK021799 Sys Board 50 MHZ (Infant Incubator) or equivalent, 6515PK0017322 DUU Board D950 (Multiparameter Monitor) or equivalent, 6515PK0017464 Controller PCB (Infant Warmer) or equivalent, 6625NL-M100 Rechargeable Battery (Anesthesia Work Station), 6625NL- 299052 Filter or equivalent, 6515PK0289418 Power-2002 Assy PH (Ventilator) or equivalent, 6515PK0289392 Power Supply Unit Assy (Infant Incubator) or equivalent, 6625NL- 01.02.008.012 Drive Board Assy (Infusion Pump) or equivalent, 6625PK027129 Control Board (Yag Ophthalmic Laser) or equivalent, 6625PK0217128 D100 Board or equivalent, 6625NL-A0101-SB01 Ultrasound Probe, 6515PK0017696 Incubator Filter (Infant Incubator) or equivalent, 6625PK0217060 Main Board (Anesthesia Work Station or equivalent), 6625NL-014-1-0026-ECurrent Power Amplifier (Electro Surgical Unit) or equivalent, 6625NL- 41615-71000 Control PCB Unit (Infant Incubator) or equivalent, 6625NL-NU-53001 Air Regulator Assy (Ventilator) or equivalent, 6515PK0289361 Patient Probe (CTG Machine) or equivalent, H1608 IC, HTCC-220V Ceramic Heater Element or equivalent, H1616 IC or equivalent, JT1 Electrical Flight Timer or equivalent, 6625PK0217408 Card Oscillator or equivalent, 5805PK0017383 DC Card (AC) or equivalent, 110D/1ARD- R60C471K97 Metal Oxide Varistor ZNR 3-5 or equivalent, 5805NL/ AUTOMAG- MGT-412 PCB Magento Board, 5820NL-GPS 170 Satellite Receiver or equivalent, <b>Note:-</b> Separate technical & financial quotation is required for each single line item, Validity of offer must be 90 days, Warranty period should be clearly mentioned on quotation, For further technical information, specification and company make, model, please contact Tele No. 021-99547321, 021-99547397											
CORRIGENDUM OF ENTRIES PUBLISHED IN NEWSPAPERS / PPRA WEBSITE							021-99547321		021-99547321		021-99547321		021-99547321							
S. NO	IT NO.	Description of Stores	Amendment in Opening Date		PUBLISHED IN NEWSPAPERS		REMARKS													
			FOR	READ																
1	424566/P-42 (Extension)	Proc & Installation of AFLS (App Light Cat-II) for Instruments Runway 06R & Reils at PAF Base MM Alam	07-01-25	22-01-25	Daily "Pakistan Observer" & "K-2" Dated 23-12-24	Opening Date Extended														
2	424567/P-42 (Extension)	Proc & Installation of AFLS (App Light Cat-II) for Instruments Runway 14L at PAF Base Murid	07-01-25	22-01-25																
3	436995/P-43 (Extension)	Proc of Spares for PAR System	02-01-25	16-01-25																
4	437012/P-43 (Extension)	Proc of Enhancement of PAF Secure-Net Architecture at PAF Bases	06-01-25	16-01-25																
3	467275/P-46 (Extension)	Sunglasses	08-01-25	22-01-25																
4	467300/P-46 (Extension)	Diesel Fuel and Petrol	08-01-25	16-01-25	Daily "The Nation" & "Ausa" Dated 30-12-24															
5	467309/P-46	Track Suit	Opening date 20-01-25	Qty= 15000 PR	Daily "The Nation" & "Ausa" Dated 06-01-25	Quantity = 5100 PR was published in Newspaper, Erroneously														
1. Instructions / Guidelines for participating in Tenders as per the prescribed SBD and complete specifications can be downloaded from PAF website i.e. www.paf.gov.pk under the heading "Media" "PAF Ads" "General Instructions DP (Air Suppliers)" (for guidelines to participate in tenders) and "Latest Advertisement" (for tender Invitation documents)																				
2. If Required ITS not found on PAF Website, concerned ADsP may be approached via request letter through e-mail address to (pa05@paf.gov.pk).																				
3. Firms, un-registered/un-indexed with DGDP interested to participate in the competition on Earnest Money are required to provide financial capability (minimum 6 months Bank Statements) proof of godown and manufacturer / stockist, 02 photocopies of NIC of the owner in case of FOR tenders and agency agreement with OEM along with the request. Request for issuance of IT will be entertained 07 days before opening date of tender.																				
4. A treasury Challan of Rs 2,000/- debitable to Main Head XLVII Main Head XII Sub Head A is required to be submitted by the un-registered/un-indexed firms along with the request.																				
5. Tender Notice is also available on PPRA website i.e. www.ppra.org.pk.																				
NO 103 ALC. PAF NUR KHAN (LOG)			081-952-7081		PAF BASE ISLAMABAD (LOG)			051-9505556												
491 .007 Pin, 492.005 Pin, 452.026 Soldering Ring, 452.24 Soldering Ring, 3002A-5-12182AT-IKD Bolt, 0.5-6-10-KD-OCT134505-80 Washer, 1-6-12-KD-OCT.1 Washer, 1-8-12-O-OCT-134505-80 Washer, H8T226-18x1.5 Packing Cap, 1.6x9.35WIETY-100/7-7 Needle Rolor, 2609052-13-2-Sealing Ring, 443.018 Coiled Spring, 5-60KOETY-100/7-11 Ball, 212.001 Ring, 212.002 Ring, 8187A.181 Washer (Ea As Req), For any query or additional information, please contact Tele No. 081-952-7081-82					VHF/UHF Antenna, Low Noise Amplifier (LNA), S-Band RF Amplifier, Drive USB Flash, 12 V DC Power Supply, RF Cable – SMA TO SMA, 2 Way L-Band Passive Splitter, ESD Wrist Band, ESD Gloves, ESD Apron, UHF Filter, UHF Antenna, UHF Amplifier, VHF Antenna, Band Pass Filter, Flir Pan Tilt Unit, Blade RF SDR, Hack RF SW DEF RAD (SDR), S-Band Patch Antenna (As Req), Note:- Separate Quotation (Technical and Financial) for each line item is required), For details / specifications / scope of work please contact Log Sqn on Mobile No: 0323-9408714, Phone No: 051-9505556, Email: Lsaq05@Paf.gov.Pk															
PAF BASE RISALPUR (LOG)			091-9503867		PAF BASE MUSHAF SARGODHA (LOG)			048-555-2278												
Nut (Part No 531 0012666931) (200 Ea), Packing Washer (Part No 5330000039301) (200 Ea), Hydraulic Trolley, Rotary Slasher (As Req), For Specifications/ scope of work any other query please Contact No Ext 3885, Mobile No: 0324-3189565					Local Repair of MRI System (SOW: Repair of Gradient Power Supply for GE 1.5T MRI Machine), Local Purchase of Differential & Planetary Oil, Transmission Oil (CD or ATF), Hyd Oil (ISO VG 46) (Ea As Req), Detailed Specifications can be obtained from Log Sqn Mushaf (Sargodha) on telephone 048-555-2278, Quantity of items can be increased or decreased as per requirement															
PAF HOSPITAL LAHORE (LOG)			Tele Ext 5235																	
Local Purchase of Batteries for X-Ray Detector Machine (As Required)																				

http://www.paf.gov.pk

### TERMS AND CONDITIONS:-

- General terms and conditions are mentioned in tender form (F-528A). Forms and tender notices complete details can be downloaded from PAF website "www.paf.gov.pk" or can be obtained from respective Bases/ Log Sqns on working days.
- The firm must be GST and professional Tax registered having NTN.
- Last date of submission of tenders: **28 JANUARY, 2025 (1000 hrs).**
- Tenders will be opened on the same day at 1100 hours.
- No advance payment will be made and payment will be subject to acceptance of the items by user activity.
- Officers Commanding of the mentioned Bases/ Units reserve the right to reject any part or the entire tender on technical grounds.
- Quotations must be valid for 90 days.
- Sales Tax as applicable must be mentioned separately.
- Guarantee / Warranty term / period should also be mentioned.
- The agreement will be governed by official secret act. 1923.



# Girls' Education: A transformative force to foster socioeconomic progress

PESHAWAR (APP): In a world striving for equality and sustainable development, empowering girls through quality education stands as a cornerstone to achieve success in life.

Education is not just a fundamental human right, but a transformative force that can break cycles of poverty, enhance economic opportunities, and foster social progress in world.

Globally, millions of girls still face barriers to get education due to various factors such as poverty, gender discrimination, early marriage, security issues and cultural norms.

Like other developing countries, Pakistan where half of its population are female, carried about a concerning 49 percent literacy rate, with around 22.8 million children aged 5 to 8 years, including many girls, currently out of schools, said Professor Dr Hafiz Muhammad Ibrahim Khan, former Chairman, Institute of Education and Rsesrch at University of Peshawar while talking to APP.

"When girls are educated, they are more likely to secure jobs, become entrepreneurs, and contribute to the economy."

He said educated girls are more likely to make informed decisions about their health and well-being of her family.

By fostering girls' confidence, critical thinking, and leadership skills, he said that education enables girls to advocate for their rights and participate actively in decision-making processes within their communities.

Dr. Ibrshim said an educated mothers tend to invest in education of their own children, which perpetuates the cycle of growth and development besides preparing a responsible generation to shoulder future responsibilities.

The experts welcomed the international conference on girls' education, held over two days in Islamabad, expressing the hope for practical solutions to existing challenges facing girls' education in Muslim communities, aligned with Islamic principles.

Dr. Ibrahim stressed the urgent need for an urgent 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-was aimed to create actionable recommendations to tackle these pressing issues.

While lauding the Federal Government's efforts for the successful international conference on girls education, the experts said Pakistan's global image has significantly been enhanced after this landmark event.

Ikhtair Wali, PMLN KP Information secretary said that the impressive conference arranged by the Govt of Pakistan in partnership with the Muslim World League (MWL), as provided a comprehensive platform to support girls' education in Muslim societies, marking a significant step in advancing educational equality.

He said the women were being imparted special technical education and vocational skills under Benazir Bhutto Income Support Program, enabling them to acquire dignified jobs besides special quota in parliament and civil service.

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

The conferences key goal was to foster international collaboration among the 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 Manzoor 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.

Manzoor said special developing strategies needed to be focused to overcome the barriers impeding girls' education.

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.

The future of education for girls depends on collaborative efforts.

Governments must prioritize education funding, remove discriminatory policies, and create safe learning environments.

The experts said communities need to support girls' education through awareness programs and by challenging traditional gender norms.

With collective action, the dream of universal girls' education can become a reality, unlocking a brighter and more prosperous future for all.

By investing in girls' education today, we are not just investing in individual success; we are creating the foundation for a better tomorrow. Girls' education is indeed a key to success for both individuals and societies, propelling us toward a more equal and sustainable educated world.

## Faith, Labor, and Sacrifice: Addressing the Crisis in Pakistan's Mines

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

**M**INING stands among the most grueling and perilous professions worldwide. Driven by the need to earn a livelihood, miners often face extreme risks, enduring conditions that challenge both their physical strength and mental resilience. These workers labor deep beneath the earth to extract coal and minerals, facing life-threatening dangers daily. In Pakistan, regions such as Balochistan, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Punjab are hubs of mining activity, yet the grim realities faced by the workers in this sector remain deeply troubling.

The very nature of mining work is fraught with danger. Miners must navigate narrow shafts, endure exposure to toxic fumes, and operate heavy machinery in dimly lit, poorly ventilated conditions. The threat of mine collapses looms constantly, claiming lives when tunnels cave in and bury workers under massive layers of rock and earth. Those who survive such incidents often sustain debilitating injuries that leave them unable to work. Despite these hardships, miners receive low wages and are offered minimal safety protections. Their contributions to industries that generate substantial profits for mine owners are rarely acknowledged. The root causes of mining accidents are manifold. Poor infrastructure, inadequate ventilation systems, lack of safety equipment, and insufficient training are persistent issues. Methane gas buildup, improper handling of explosives, and negligent maintenance further exacerbate the dangers. In many cases, the indifference of mine owners and contractors plays a critical role, as safety protocols are often disregarded in favor of profit. Ensuring the safety of miners requires a robust and enforceable framework. Governments must establish and implement strict safety regulations, complemented by regular inspections of mining sites. Miners should be equipped with modern protective gear, including helmets, respirators, and reinforced clothing, to safeguard them from toxic gases and potential accidents. Comprehensive training programs are essential to familiarize workers with safety measures and emergency response procedures. Additionally, setting up medical facilities near mining sites and devising effective evacuation plans can significantly reduce fatalities during accidents.

The compensation framework for miners who lose their lives remains inadequate across Pakistan. In Balochistan, where much of the mining activity is concentrated, compensation laws exist but are poorly enforced. Families of deceased miners typically receive payments ranging from PKR 500,000 to 1,000,000-an amount that barely addresses the financial strain of losing a primary breadwinner. Similar challenges exist in Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Punjab, where families are often left to negotiate with mine owners for support. These compensation packages need to be reassessed to provide more substantial and long-term financial stability for the affected families. Mining activities in Pakistan are particularly intensive in Balochistan, which is rich in coal, gold, copper, and other minerals, attracting both local and international investors. However, safety standards in the province's mines remain alarmingly low. Methane gas explosions and tunnel collapses occur frequently, and the lack of medical infrastructure near mining sites aggravates the situation. In Sindh's coal mines and Punjab's salt mines, workers face similar perils, including long hours and insufficient protective equipment. Meanwhile, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, miners extracting marble and gemstones contend with hazardous dust and unstable working conditions in rugged terrains. Islamic teachings add profound significance to the struggles of miners. Islam values earning a livelihood through honest, hard work. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) stated, "No one eats better food than that which he eats out of the work of his hand" (Bukhari). Despite the dangerous conditions, miners embody this ideal as they labor tirelessly to support their families and communities. Employers, too, bear a moral responsibility in Islam to ensure the well-being of their workers. The Prophet (peace be upon him) emphasized this, saying, "Pay the worker his wages before his sweat dries" (Ibn Majah), highlighting the importance of fair and timely compensation.

The economic disparity between mine owners and workers is stark. While owners and contractors accumulate substantial wealth from mining activities, the laborers who bear the brunt of the risks often lack access to basic necessities like clean drinking water, healthcare, and education for their children. This inequity perpetuates cycles of poverty and exploitation, leaving workers and their families trapped in a cycle of hardship.

Addressing the challenges faced by miners demands a multifaceted approach. Governments must strictly enforce safety standards, ensuring that miners are provided with protective gear and access to emergency medical care. Compensation packages for injured or deceased miners must be restructured to adequately reflect the sacrifices of workers and support their families. Mine owners and contractors must also be held accountable for providing humane working conditions and equitable profit-sharing with their laborers.

In addition to structural reforms, societal recognition of miners' contributions is vital. These individuals form the backbone of industries that drive national development, yet their efforts often go unnoticed. Their struggles spotlight broader labor rights and economic inequality issues, underscoring the need for collective action to foster a more equitable society. The Quran affirms the dignity of labor, declaring, "And that there is not for man except that [good] for which he strives" (Surah An-Najm, 53:39). Miners exemplify this verse through their tireless endeavors to provide for their families, despite the dangers they face. The resilience and dedication of miners in Pakistan serve as a testament to the human spirit's ability to endure adversity. Their sacrifices compel us to address their challenges and uphold principles of fairness, safety, and dignity, as advocated by both Islamic teachings and universal principles of justice. By taking these steps, we can build a future where miners' contributions are respected, their lives are safeguarded, and their sacrifices are truly valued.

## Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi visits China Window Peshawar, applauds Pak-China friendship

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Renowned Pakistani tennis star Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi recently visited the China Window, a cultural and information center in Peshawar dedicated to fostering a deeper understanding of Pak-China relations. Secretary General of Pakistan Tennis Federation Cil R Zia Ud Din , Col R Gul Rehman and Secretary KP Tennis Ssassociation Umar Ayaz were also accompanied.

During his visit, Aisam praised the efforts of the organizers in promoting bilateral ties and highlighted the enduring friendship between Pakistan and China.

The visit served as an opportunity for the tennis icon to explore the various aspects of the China Window, which showcases China's rich history, culture, technology, and contributions to global progress. The center also emphasizes the strength and depth of the Pak-China friendship, which has been an example of mutual respect and cooperation on both diplomatic and public levels.

Aisam-ul-Haq expressed admiration for the initiative, noting that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and similar projects represent the unwavering commitment of both nations to progress and development.

He commended the China Window team for creating a space that not only educates visitors about China's achievements but also strengthens people-to-people connections.

In his remarks, Aisam lauded the decades-long friendship between the two nations, referring to it as a "shining example of trust and collaboration". He also appreciated the center's efforts in educating the youth about the benefits of this relationship and how it contributes to Pakistan's socio-economic development.



PESHAWAR: Helicopter of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government delivered the medicines to the Kurram Agency.

## Illegal cigarette manufacturing Pakistan loses over Rs. 567bn in revenue

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A high-level meeting was co-chaired by Federal Minister of State Ali Pervez Malik and KP Advisor to the Chief Minister of Finance, Muzammil Aslam, to discuss tobacco smuggling and illegal cigarette manufacturing.

The meeting was attended by the Excise Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, representatives from the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), Pakistan Tobacco Board, and tobacco companies.

During the meeting, a detailed discussion was held on tobacco smuggling and illegal cigarette manufacturing, highlighting the significant revenue loss of over Rs. 567 billion to the country over the past decade. Furthermore, the severe health risks associated with these illicit activities were emphasized.

The meeting resulted in key agreements between federal and provincial government representatives, including strengthening the estimation process to prevent illicit tobacco cultivation, enhancing track and trace Mechanisms for implementing better tracking systems to monitor tobacco products and data sharing for improved Surveillance for facilitating data sharing to enhance surveillance on cigarette exports.

Advisor Finance emphasized that KP's nominal provincial excise duty on tobacco is ring-fenced to support health service delivery in the province. He encouraged manufacturers to withdraw their legal challenges and engage in constructive dialogue for a mutually beneficial resolution.

The meeting concluded with the formation of a special technical committee to prepare a comprehensive action plan for the implementation of the decisions made. The active role of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government in revenue protection was also appreciated.

## Demand for medicines increased in Kurram

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Adviser on Health, Ihtisham Ali, has stated that the demand for medicines has significantly increased in Kurram district due to the extreme weather conditions. He also highlighted a noticeable rise in outpatient visits for children's illnesses in the region. Adviser Ihtisham Ali reassured the public that the supply of medicines to health centers in Kurram district continues uninterrupted. He informed that today, 2,900 kilograms of medicines were delivered to Sadda Hospital in Lower Kurram. The delivery was made possible through two flights of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government's MI-17 helicopter. Emergency medicines worth Rs. 1.5 million have been handed over to the Medical Superintendent of Sadda Hospital.

## Buddha stupas: a rich historical heritage

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where every stone speaks about ancient Gandhara civilization, relics and stupas whisper tales of the Buddhists heritage, attracting tourists and followers of Buddhism.

The visitors, soon after entering the northern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, are amazed to see abundance of archaeological sites and ancient stupas reminding them about the lifestyle of Buddha, the founder of Buddhism.

These centuries-old monasteries and stupas had served as a living testament to historical, cultural and religious importance of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where leaders and followers of different faiths came for propagation of their religions by establishing dynasties in the subcontinent.

Varying in size and architectural designs, these Buddha stupas offer a fascinating glimpses into the ancient Buddhists past and take tourists to its history with pleasant memories of Pakistan being a land of heritage tourism, said Bakht Muhammad, Assistant Director, Archealogy and Museums Department KP while talking to APP.

Highlighting heritage importance of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, he said it was the 26th province of Gandhara civilization in the South Asian region as evident of the Persian inscriptions mentioned by archaeologists and historians Rigveda and Atharveda in 2nd Millennium BC.

He said in 7th century BC, three Chinese historians Fahien, Xiuntsang and Sanune had exclusively talked about 1,000 stupas found in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where monks and archeologists mostly from east southern countries came for performance of religious obligations.

"Later, the semi-nomadic Aryans had entered KP from the Afghanistan side, and settled alongside of rivers Swat, Gomal, Kurram, and Kabul where Gandhara civilization gained roots after Persians conquered it and made it one of the provinces of the Achaemenid Empire."

The reading and writing in Swat, Dir, Mardan, Charsadda, Peshawar and Malakand, famous for Gandhara civilization, started as evidence of the inscriptions mostly made on stones by the Iranians in existing KP.

"It is evident of history that Gandhara Civilization and Buddha stupas had witnessed construction as well as onslaught of the kings, invaders and warriors during different eras including Indo-Greeks with 41 kings and queens, Sethians, Hindus, Parthians, Khushans, Sikhs, Turks Shahi and Muslims whom marched to subcontinent for establishment of dynasties and constructed stupas" he informed.

When Alexander the Great invaded the subcontinent through Khyber Pass, he faced tough resistance while trying to subdue Youafzai tribesmen at Swat and Kunar valleys in 327 BC. Alexander the Great constructed two new cities Wazira (Barikot) and Ora (Odigram) in Swat district in 327BC where stupas were built.

"The White Huns who came from Central Asia in 558 century had inflicted losses to Buddhists stupas and monasteries while the Hindus rulers had destroyed stupas in existing India in different wars," he said.

The archeology expert said the existing Charsadda (Pushkalavati), Peshawar and Hund Swabi were declared the capital cities of Gandhara where Buddha stupas were constructed for propagation of Buddhism.

He said that a large Buddha stupa was also built at Sultanhankel in Khyber district being a gateway of Central Asian Republics via Afghanistan and Indo-Pakistan subcontinent.

"I am very impressed to see the large Buddha stupa of Khyber and its preservation by the KP government," said Muhammad Ibrahim, an archeology lover of Peshawar.

"KP is home to Buddhist stupas and we need to highlight it through digital media through short videos to attract foreign investment," he said.

He said these Buddhist stupas draw monks and followers of Buddhism from across the country especially Nepal, Sri Lanka and other countries every year to this part of Pakistan.

Bakht Muhammad disclosed that excavation at Shahgee Kadhari, Peshawar conducted by British archaeologists in 1909 had led to recoveries of bones of Buddha.

"These bones were later gifted to Myanmar while the clay pot where these bones were kept had been preserved at Peshawar Museum being the lone museum of Gandhara art in the world."

Following death of Buddha, he said that five stupas carrying his relics were constructed in existing Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Butkara Stupa in Swat built in 2nd century BC was an architectural masterpiece adorned with intricate carvings and motifs reflected the artistry of that ancient time.

"Butkara Stupa stands as a symbol of the region's historical significance and is a must-visit destination for history enthusiasts."

In the serene town of Takht-i-Bahi (Mardan), the ruins of an ancient Buddhist monastery and stupas take visitors on a journey back in time. These structures, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, are remarkably well-preserved by Pakistan, providing a unique opportunity to tourists to explore these architectural wonders and spiritual importance of the region's Buddhist past.

Khushan Stupa, situated near Peshawar, constructed around the 3rd century AD, is a testament to the enduring legacy of Buddhism in the area. The intricate carvings and inscriptions on the stupa narrate stories of the Buddha's life and teachings, offering a window into the spirituality and artistry of ancient Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

As these stupas are historical treasures for many, they are also places of spiritual significance for Buddhists around the world. Pilgrims and tourists alike visit these sites to pay their respects and gain a deeper understanding of Buddhism's roots in the region.

Nawazuddin Khan, Incharge Sub Regional Office Archealogy Malakand district told APP that there are a lot of heritage sites in Swat including Bazira, Shigardar Stupa, Ghelegay Buddhist monument, Butkara Stupa 1 and 2, Saidu Stupa and its proper projection through social and digital media can turned KP into a hub of heritage tourism.

Waris Khattak, a tourist of Karak who visited Budha Stupas in Swat said that the KP government should start an awareness campaign and give the opportunity to TikTokers and documentary makers to shoot in these sites.

He said the KP government should end the ticket system and open the sites for all kinds of visitors imperative for promotion of heritage tourism.

Dr Abdul Samad, Director Archealogy and Museums KP said that conservation of Bhuddha Stupa at Sultankel Khyber were almost completed restoring its architectural wonder.

The Archeology Guru said that conservation of stupas at Cheena, Shangal Dagh, Amluk Dara, Abassi Cheena in Swat, Takht Bhai, Jamal Ghari in Mardan, Aziz Dheri and Baja Swabi were also completed, attracting tourists in droves.

He said that small videos of these were prepared for proper protection on digital and social media to attract foreign tourists.





## In brief

### Robbers kill youth

**LAKKI MARWAT (APP):** A youth was killed while resisting during a robbery in Nar Haidaran area, in the vicinity of Sarai Naurang police station in Lakki Marwat district on Sunday. Police said unknown robbers shot dead a youth, identified as Qadar Khan when he resisted during the robbery. Body of the deceased was shifted to Tehsil Headquarters Hospital for medico legal procedure. Police have registered a case and started a search for the robbers.

### Man held for human trafficking

**MULTAN (APP):** Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Composite Circle claimed on Sunday to have arrested a suspect involved in human trafficking. The suspect identified as Nasir Nazir was arrested from Mian Channu. According to FIA officials, the accused along with his accomplices allegedly took Rs 980,000 from a citizen with a promise to send him Bahrain for a job but he failed to deliver and subsequently went into hiding. A case has been registered against the accused.

### Chashma project F.P. Report

**KARAK:** Chashma Akhora Khel Dam is an important and revolutionary Project of the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Karak District which will change the destiny of the people. This dam will store 11093 Acre Feet of water annually by collecting water from an area of 221134 Square Kilometers and will play an important role in irrigating 3100 Acres of land. This ambitious Project will not only solve the water problems but also strengthen the economy of the region by providing new opportunities in agriculture, energy and employment sectors. Using modern construction techniques, the Dam has a width of 1250 Feet and a Height of 98 Feet, making it an exemplary piece of engineering. Chashma Akhora Khel Dam is a milestone of new ways of development and prosperity in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It will not only bring barren lands with fertility but also bring economic and social prosperity to the people lives. This dam is a practical reflection of the Tehreek-e-Insaaf government firm intentions and far-sighted decisions that guarantee a bright and stable future for Pakistan.

### Mehr responds to Maryam

**ATTOCK (INP):** Mehr Bano Qureshi, the leader of PTI and daughter of former Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi, has hit back at Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif following her recent statement at the launch of the "Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif Livestock Card." During the event, Maryam Nawaz commented on the condition of some humans, likening them to animals affected by foot-and-mouth disease, and accused her political opponents of speaking nothing but swearing. In response, Mehr Bano Qureshi questioned Maryam Nawaz's credibility, sarcastically suggesting that since she claims to have a cure for animals, she might also have a remedy for low platelets, a condition she implied Maryam herself might be suffering from. Qureshi further criticized Maryam Nawaz, asserting that the treatment Maryam refers to is nothing more than fascism and a stranglehold on the law.

# Governor Kundi reiterates to uplift Dera region

**DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP):** Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi on Sunday reiterated to take tangible measures for the socio-economic development of Dera Ismail Khan.

He expressed these views during a marriage ceremony of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) District President Malik Farhan Afzal Dhap's cousin held here on Sunday.

He mingled with people and shared moments with them as well as highlighting various development

initiatives for the district. Speaking on the occasion, he said the PPP has always prioritized the welfare of the people and raised its voice on all forums in this regard.

He assured the people of Dera Ismail Khan that numerous development projects were currently underway, which would provide modern facilities and create opportunities for economic growth, ultimately transforming the region.

The ceremony was attended by several influential figures, including

former Provincial Minister Abdul Haleem Qasuria, PPP leader Qaizar Khan Miankhel, PPP leader Malik Farhan Afzal Dhap and others.

Following the event, he also congratulated on the wedding of Syed Muhammad Raza, a son of former Nazim Syed Muhammad Abid Shah at his residence.

Similarly, the governor paid a condolence visit to the residence of party worker Salaar Hussain over the demise of later's aunt and offered prayers (fatehah).

## 84-member Hindu delegation from India arrives in Sukkur

**SUKKUR (APP):** An 84-member delegation of Hindu pilgrims from India, led by Santh Yudhishtir Lal, arrived in Sukkur here on Sunday. The delegation visited the historic Sadhu Bela Temple, where they performed special prayers for human progress, prosperity, and regional peace.

The delegation was warmly received by the Hindu community, who

welcomed them with traditional drum beats. Ishwar Lal, head of the Hindu Panchayat Sukkur, Deputy Mayor Dr Arshad Mughal, and other officials also extended a warm welcome to the delegation.

Yudhishtir Lal expressed his gratitude for the love and affection shown to the delegation, saying it would be remembered forever.

He also highlighted the

strong bonds between India and Pakistan, stated that the people of both countries have a special place in their hearts for each other.

Every year, Hindu pilgrims from India visit Sukkur to pay homage to their historical places of worship.

This visit is a testament to the strong cultural and religious ties between the two countries.

## ‘Sarson ka Saag’: A winter delight

**SARGODHA (APP):** As winter sets in, the rural landscapes of Punjab transform into picturesque vistas, with vast mustard fields swaying gently in the misty breeze. These fields not only symbolize the season but also inspire one of the region's most cherished dishes—Sarson ka Saag.

This traditional delicacy was prepared using tender green mustard leaves and was best enjoyed with ‘Makkai ki Roti’, a bread made from cornflour. Topped with a dollop of white butter, the dish becomes a hearty, nutritious meal that embodies the essence of winter in Punjab.

Muhammad Ashraf, a

resident of Sultan Colony, shared with APP that although he has lived in the city for 30 years, he still sources fresh sarson ka saag from his village near Shahnikdar to relive the authentic taste of his roots. Similarly, Shazia Bibi from Raza Colony revealed that her family eagerly awaits winter for her weekly preparation of this dish, which has become a household favorite.

Health experts highlight the nutritional value of this winter staple. Dr. Javed, a nutritionist, emphasized the abundance of antioxidants in saag, such as beta-carotene and flavonoids, which combat oxidative stress and inflammation.

“This dish is not only warming but also incredibly nourishing,” he said.

Renowned chef Muhammad Asif praised saag's versatility, noting its ability to cater to diverse dietary needs. He explained that the traditional slow-cooking method enhances its nutritional value by preserving essential minerals and nutrients, while ingredients like garlic and ginger amplify both its flavor and health benefits.

Sarson ka Saag, a timeless winter delight, continues to celebrate Punjab's culinary heritage, connecting families to their traditions and offering both warmth and nourishment during the chilly season.



**QUETTA:** Camels passing through a picturesque mountainous region.

## GB's export potential of dry fruits vital for economic growth

**GILGIT-BALTISTAN (APP):** Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) region is blessed with unique climate and fertile soil that enables the production of an impressive variety of dry fruits ranging from apricots and almonds to walnuts and cherries, the region's produce stands out for its taste, quality, and nutritional value.

However, despite of its huge potential, the GB's fruit industry remains an underutilized asset in Pakistan's economic portfolio, primarily due to inadequate infrastructure, limited marketing strategies and lack of global exposure.

The GB's geography and climate provide the ideal conditions for producing high-quality fruits like apricots, almonds, walnuts, and cherries. Recent reports reveal that

the region produces over 3,000 metric tons of dry apricots, an equal quantity of almonds, and a staggering 100,000 metric tons of walnuts annually. In addition, the region's cherries have gained recognition for their distinct flavor and quality, recently making headlines for their successful export to China.

In 2024, a significant milestone was achieved when Gilgit-Baltistan's cherry growers exported a large consignment to China, earning both praise and financial returns. The cherries, known for their superior sweetness and organic cultivation were well-received in Chinese markets. This successful venture highlights the immense potential of expanding fruit exports from the region to inter-

national markets.

One of the standout features of Gilgit-Baltistan's fruits is their exceptional nutritional value. Packed with vitamins, minerals and antioxidants, they serve as a healthy snack option for consumers worldwide.

“Dry fruits from this region are nutritional powerhouses,” says Dr. Sara Khan, a nutritionist based in Gilgit. “They are rich in vitamins essential for immune support, skin health, and heart health. For instance, apricots are loaded with vitamin A and C, while almonds and walnuts provide protein and healthy fats essential for overall well-being. Including these in the daily diet can significantly improve health.”

Beyond their economic significance, the fruits of Gilgit-Baltistan hold cul-

tural and traditional value. “We take great pride in our dry fruits, especially apricots, cherries, and walnuts,” says Karim Shah, a dry fruit farmer from Hunza. “These fruits are not just a source of income; they are deeply rooted in our culture and heritage.”

The organic nature of these fruits adds to their appeal. Grown without pesticides and nurtured using traditional irrigation methods, they align with the increasing global demand for eco-friendly and organic products. This presents an opportunity to market these fruits as premium-quality items in international markets.

Despite its potential, the fruit industry in Gilgit-Baltistan faces several challenges. According to Nisar Ahmed, a local marketing

expert, lack of infrastructure, limited cold storage facilities and insufficient marketing strategies are major hurdles.

“To tap into the global market, we need to invest in packaging and labeling to highlight our products' unique qualities,” Ahmed suggests. “Participation in international food expos, the use of social media for e-marketing, and forging partnerships with global distributors can help expand market reach. Additionally, emphasizing sustainable farming practices can attract eco-conscious consumers.”

He added “the government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have a crucial role in unlocking the export potential of Gilgit-Baltistan's fruit industry”. “Establishing cold stor-

age facilities, providing financial support and imparting training to farmers to meet international quality standards are essential steps, he explained. “Furthermore, aligning production cycles with global demand and introducing certification programs can ensure the region's fruits find a place on the shelves of global markets” Nisar said.

Retired Director of Agriculture and Livestock Gilgit-Baltistan highlighted the potential economic benefits: “If properly marketed, the region's farmers could earn over \$20 million annually from dry fruit exports, compared to the current earning of just Rs. 50 million.”

The region is a treasure trove of high-quality fruits, waiting to be dis-

covered by the world. With strategic interventions, robust marketing efforts, and government support, the region can transform into a global hub for premium fruits.

Success stories like cherry exports to China demonstrate the untapped potential of this industry. By investing in infrastructure, embracing modern marketing tools, and prioritizing eco-friendly practices, Gilgit-Baltistan's fruit sector can become a significant contributor to Pakistan's economy while uplifting the livelihoods of local communities.

As the world seeks healthier and organic food options, the fruits of Gilgit-Baltistan are poised to shine on the global stage—turning this hidden gem into a celebrated treasure.



**SWAT:** Member National Assembly Dr Amjad Ali presenting trophy to Mashal, winner of the Kalam Jeep Race in women category.

## Female racer excels as 13th Kalam Snow Jeep Race concludes F.P. Report

**SWAT:** A woman jeep racer excelled as the thrilling 13th Kalam Snow Jeep Race concluded at the Shahi Ground here on Sunday.

The race organised by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA), Upper Swat Development Authority, Frontier 4x4 Club and Pakistan Army, featured competitions in three categories: Zero to 2500cc, 2500cc to Open, Vintage, and ladies category. Over 50 4x4 jeeps participated in the

Member National Assembly Dr Amjad Ali was the chief guest at the closing ceremony, who awarded prizes and shields to the excelling jeep racers.

Member Provincial Assembly Sharafat Ali, Director General Upper Swat Development Authority Adnan Abrar, Frontier 4x4 Club president Babar Khan, KPCTA officials and other dignitaries also attended the event.

The race was conducted in three different categories. In the Women's category, Mashal secured the first position. In Category A, Babar Khan completed the track in 1 minute and 7 seconds, clinching first place, while Bacha Khan and Dr Tahir took second and third places, respectively.

In Category B, Yaseen secured first position followed by Muhammad Saeed in second and Waqas in third.

The Tourism Police, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police and Rescue 1122 personnel provided full support in organising the race and safeguarding the racers and tourists.

Dr Amjad Ali while addressing the gathering said that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government was taking tangible measures to promote and develop tourism. He commended the KPCTA and the Upper Swat Development Authority for organising a remarkable race in collaboration with the Frontier 4x4 Club at Kalam's Shahi Ground.

He added that such events were essential to boost tourism activities in Kalam. The lawmaker said that efforts would continue to provide all possible facilities to tourists visiting Kalam during the winter season.

## Fair use of fund to be ensured: Law Minister

### F.P. Report

**KOHAT:** Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs Aftab Alam Afridi Advocate has said that transparent and fair use of Production Bonus Fund (PBF) will be ensured at all costs and each and every penny will be spent purely on the welfare of the people.

He added that a comprehensive development plan will be devised keeping in view the needs of each area under the PBF. He expressed these views while presiding over a meeting held in the Commissioner House Kohat regarding Production Bonus Fund.

The meeting beside

others, was also attended by Shahryar Afridi MNA, Chairman DDAC Kohat Shafi Jan MPA, Daud Shah Afridi MPA, Deputy Commissioner Kohat Abdul Akram, Tehsil Nazims of Gumbat and Lachi and authorities concerned of the respective departments.

The meeting discussed in detail the ways and means to ensure the transparent and judicious utilization of Production Bonus and several important decisions were taken in this regard.

The meeting stressed on preparing the projects of public interest in the fields of education, health, drinking water, electricity, gas, communication and works under the PB Fund.

Matters of distribution of the said fund for investment in various sectors were also came under active consideration. The law minister directed the authorities concerned to prepare such projects across the district which would directly benefit the people.

He further directed that coordination between all departments is very important for timely completion of the projects. Aftab Alam expressed his gratitude on the gathering of all the elected representatives on same page for the public welfare and agreeing on the use of resources for the people is very encouraging move and it will have a far-reaching impact on the development of Kohat.

## District Development Coordinator Committee meets

### F.P. Report

**HAFIZABAD:** A meeting of District Development Coordinator Committee, Hafizabad, held at district complex. Chief Minister's Coordinator for Population Welfare, Punjab, Saira Afzal Tarar said that presided over the meeting.

Progress on ongoing development projects reviewed in the meeting. Deputy Commissioner Abdul Tazzaq, MPA Aoun Jhangir Bhatti, offices of different departments

attended the meeting.

Addressing the meeting Saira Afzal Tarar said that present government is taking all possible measures to upgrade living standard of people across the province and billion of rupees is spending to complete development projects in the Punjab including district Hafizabad.

She said that Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif was introduced various programmes for providing relief to the people at their threshold whereas

fruits of people friendly steps of the government were reaching to the people.

Meanwhile, Saira Afzal Tarar said in a statement issued here that 190 million pound (Al-Qadir Trust) is biggest and heinous crime in the history of the Pakistan and it's all Beneficiaries should be reached to their logical end for maintain rule of law and for containing misuse of powers in future. Misuse of power must be stopped to strengthen National Economy, she added.

## Rs 698m spent on revamp of 34 BHUs, 4 RHCs

**LODHRAN (APP):** Deputy Commissioner Dr Lubna Nazir on Sunday visited the Basic Health Unit (BHU) in Danwan as part of an inspection of the ongoing health infrastructure in the district.

Under the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, the revamping of 34 Basic Health Units and 4 Rural Health Centers was underway in Lodhran at an estimated cost of Rs 698 million.

During her visit, Dr Lubna Nazir reiterated the government's commitment to providing exemplary healthcare services to the public.

She stated, “The up-gradation of health facilities across the district is progressing at a rapid pace to ensure that quality medical services are available to the people right at their doorstep.”

The Deputy Commissioner inspected various sections of the BHU and reviewed the progress of ongoing repair and renovation work.

She reiterated the importance of equipping health centers with modern medical technology and ensuring the deployment of skilled medical professionals.

Highlighting the focus on rural health, Dr Nazir

said: “They are transforming the infrastructure of health facilities in rural areas to meet modern standards.

This will ensure that patients, even from the remote areas, could access quality healthcare services near their homes”, she added.

She said that rural health centers would provide essential medical services, including gynecology and emergency care. “The government is committed to delivering world class healthcare services to every citizen of Punjab, and this initiative is a major step towards this direction,” she concluded.





LOS ANGELES: Kevin Marshall sifts through his mother's fire-ravaged property in the Pacific Palisades neighborhood of Los Angeles.

## Canada is preparing to strike back hard with retaliatory tariffs if Trump starts a trade war

VANCOUVER (CNN): Canada is preparing to retaliate with an exhaustive list of tariffs on American goods if President-elect Donald Trump follows through with his plans to add a steep 25% import tax on Canadian goods, people familiar with the matter told CNN. The preparations show how raising tariffs could kick off a trade war that will ultimately raise prices on a number of consumer goods around the world.

Canadian officials are working on a list of dozens of American products that the United States exports to Canada, targeting items that both send a political message and inflict a reasonable amount of economic damage, two sources said.

Included in the list of items considered for tariffs are ceramic products, steel products, furniture, certain alcoholic beverages like Bourbon and Jack Daniels whiskey, orange juice and pet food, among other goods, the people familiar with the plans told CNN. American energy exports are also on the list, and – as a last resort – Canada could levy a tax on the energy products Canada exports

to the United States.

But the sources cautioned that nothing has been decided yet, and the list could ultimately change or not be imposed at all.

“I think we have to be ready,” said Melanie Joly, Canada’s foreign minister, during a press briefing in Ottawa Friday, as she was going into a cabinet meeting to discuss the list of retaliatory tariffs.

“I think that when President Trump talks, we listen, and we need to take him very seriously,” Joly said, adding that it was important for the president-elect and the people advising him to know there would be consequences if he imposes tariffs on Canadian products and that Canada has “leverage.”

The tariffs could deal a blow to Canadian businesses, which are preparing for a trade war with the United States, according to Goldy Hyder, CEO of the Business Council of Canada. Hyder told CNN that his membership, which includes Canada’s top CEOs, have only recently been consulted by the government and are being asked for input on retaliatory tariffs.

“We need to carefully articulate how we would respond,”

Hyder said. “Some have said we should just simply mirror their tariffs, others have said we should be more temperate in our response to get their attention, others have said we should ‘swing big’ and respond with great strength.”

Hyder told CNN that Canadian business leaders have been preparing for a Trump presidency for nearly a year, but he noted that the implications of each strategy are still being analyzed.

A budding trade war

The announcement seemed designed to show that Ottawa is unafraid to get into a full-blown trade war, one that would deliver real economic pain to US workers, firms and allies of Trump.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced plans to resign earlier this week, following a mounting set of crises, including tariff threats from Trump.

As Canada has faced an intensifying political crisis, Trump has piled even more pressure on the longtime US friend and ally.

Trump has vowed to impose 25% tariffs on Canada on his first day in office unless Ottawa

addresses his concerns about the flow of illegal drugs across the border.

Trump has argued that the best way for Canada to avoid the pain of US tariffs would be to join the United States.

“If Canada merged with the US, there would be no Tariffs, taxes would go way down, and they would be TOTALLY SECURE from the threat of the Russian and Chinese Ships that are constantly surrounding them,” Trump said in a Truth Social post on Monday.

Canada is the United States’ largest trading partner. The United States imported \$419 billion worth of Canadian goods in 2023, including everything from lumber and cement to cars and minerals. Canada is also the largest source of foreign oil into the United States.

During a press conference on Tuesday, Trump would not rule out using “economic force” to make a merger with Canada possible and said the United States doesn’t “need” anything made in Canada.

“They have a very small military. They rely on our military. It’s fine, but they’ve got to pay for that,” Trump said.

## Zuckerberg’s MAGA turn insulates Meta for a while

NEW YORK (CNN): Four years ago, Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg banned Donald Trump from Facebook and Instagram, saying the risks of allowing him on the platforms were “simply too great” after Trump repeatedly used the sites to broadcast election lies and cheer on the January 6 mob.

**A lot’s changed.**

Now, Zuckerberg is making it crystal clear that Meta and MAGA can get along.

The social media giant is canning its fact-checkers and making its platforms look a little more like X, the site owned by “first buddy” Elon Musk. At the same time, Meta named Trump ally and UFC boss Dana White to its board of directors on Monday, days after elevating Joel Kaplan, the most prominent Republican lobbyist for the company, to be its new head of global affairs. Meta was one of several large tech companies to donate \$1 million to Trump’s inauguration fund.

And Zuckerberg — whom Trump once threatened with life in prison — has personally made the pilgrimage to Mar-a-Lago to dine with the incoming president since the election.

While Zuckerberg is clearly trying to insulate Meta from Trump’s looming corporate retribution tour, he’s also courting a potential disaster if Meta’s advertisers flee and users begin to associate the brand — already tarnished by AI slop and a yearslong dearth of innovation — with the kinds of unsavory characters who now dominate X.

On Tuesday morning, Zuckerberg tapped the president-elect’s favorite TV channel, Fox News, to announce that the world’s dominant social media platforms are now, for all intents and purposes, pro-Trump. Meta is getting rid of its third-party fact-checkers, Zuckerberg said, because they have been “too politically biased,” made too many mistakes “and have destroyed more trust than they’ve created” — unfalsifiable statements that echo the right’s long-time claim that Facebook censors conservative views.

Meta will replace fact-checkers with “community notes” similar to those on X, in which users can add comments to posts that may

contain false information.

In another questionable decision announced Tuesday, Zuckerberg added that Meta will move its content moderation team to Texas from California, saying this would “remove the concern that biased employees are overly censoring content.” (Meta didn’t respond to CNN’s question about why a team located in Texas would be less biased than one in California.)

The hits kept coming on Tuesday, as my colleague Clare Duffy reported that Meta quietly updated its guidelines to free users who want to refer to gay and transgender people as having a “mental illness,” or refer to women as “household objects” and “property.”

All of this buys Meta some insurance going into an era of Trump 2.0. As business leaders remember all too well from Round One, Trump has shown little restraint when he senses companies are being insufficiently loyal. Meta’s own stock tumbled in March after Trump called in to CNBC to label Facebook an “enemy of the people.”

If Meta were to take the harder line it invoked four years ago, it could expect to find itself in Trump’s crosshairs on social media and shut out of the rooms where rivals like Musk are making decisions about tech’s future.

But Meta’s repositioning is hardly a foolproof business plan. Just take a look at X, the site Musk acquired in 2022 when it was called Twitter. Musk remade the site in his own image, reinstating White nationalists and other offensive accounts that had been banned under Twitter’s safety guidelines. Advertisers, wary of their products appearing alongside hate speech, rushed to the exits. Millions of users, similarly unhappy about the return of neo-Nazis on the platform, also left for competitors like Bluesky and Meta’s Threads.

X’s value has cratered 80% since Musk bought it, according to estimates from investment giant Fidelity.

That’s not a huge problem for X and Musk, who could theoretically bankroll the entire operation himself.

The same can’t be said for Meta, one of the world’s most valuable public companies, with a market cap of \$1.5 trillion.

“Brand safety remains a key factor in determining where advertisers spend their budgets,” Emarketer principal analyst Jasmine Enberg said in an email Tuesday. “Social media is already a minefield for content that many brands deem unsafe, and Meta’s change could exacerbate those problems.”

Even a slight dropoff in engagement could hurt the business, Enberg said.

We’ve seen it before.

In 2022, Meta lost nearly \$240 billion in market value in a single day — the biggest one-day drop in company value in the history of the US stock market at the time — after it reported a slight decline in daily active Facebook users and an 8% drop in quarterly profit.

That hits Zuckerberg where he lives, because he’s the biggest individual shareholder, says Cory Doctorow, a journalist, author and activist with the nonprofit Electronic Frontier Foundation. But more importantly, stock swings hit the rich-but-not-billionaire-rich class of Meta executives.

“Zuckerberg is insulated from the consequences of making bad choices until he’s not — until things reach a breaking point... and then he tends to panic,” Doctorow told me. “Tech calls these panics ‘pivots,’ but they’re just the outcome of being the CEO of a company that posts anemic growth or even a contraction and sees the Street just go nuts on you.”

Past “pivots” have included the Metaverse, the sci-fi nonsense that Zuckerberg pitched as the future of the company three years ago. More recently, Meta is testing out its own AI-generated “users” in an apparent ploy to goose engagement.

“They’re now at the end of a long run of extremely bad choices,” Doctorow said. Which is not to say Meta is doomed, per se. “But I think that they are on the path to becoming a kind of zombie — like MySpace is today. MySpace still exists. It’s just AI-generated slop and spam.”

## Toll from French tram crash rises to 68 injured

STRASBOURG (AFP) : The toll from a collision of two trams in Strasbourg has risen to 68 injured in a rare accident that sowed panic near the eastern French city’s main train station, authorities said Sunday.

On Saturday afternoon, a stationary tram at the underground stop at Strasbourg’s main railway station was violently hit by another tram, which began to move backwards for unknown reasons.

The moving tram, which had stopped due to a traffic jam, reversed and rolled down a slope leading to the station.

Both trams carried dozens of passengers.

As a result of the collision,

68 people were injured, according to the prefecture, which released an updated toll Sunday.

Around a hundred people escaped unhurt.

The collision occurred near Strasbourg’s main train station, one of the busiest in France outside of Paris. Video footage posted online showed chaotic scenes with the two trams significantly damaged, an alarm going off and people screaming.

“The tram set off again at full speed towards the station,” said Romaric Koumba, one of the passengers.

“As we were setting off again towards the station, we realised that there was

already another tram that had returned to the station. This tram was at a standstill, thank God,” said Romaric Koumba, one of the passengers.

“When the tram collided with the other one, the doors flew off,” he added.

Another witness, Johan Kirschenbaum, said the moving train apparently had a problem with the brakes.

“We heard a big impact, a big bang,” he said.

On Saturday, Rene Cellier, director of the Bas-Rhin fire and rescue service, said that around 50 people suffered non-fatal injuries such as scalp wounds, clavicle fractures, and knee sprains. “Mostly

trauma,” Cellier said.

Cellier said that the situation “could have been much more serious.”

The public prosecutor’s office said an investigation into “unintentional injuries” had been opened, with the aim of determining the cause of the accident and identifying any criminal liability.

Prosecutors said the collision was not deliberate.

“An initial investigation has ruled out the hypothesis of an intentional act,” said Alexandre Chevrier, the acting public prosecutor.

The two drivers were not injured but were “very shocked,” said the director of the Strasbourg transport company (CTS),

Emmanuel Auneau.

Tram traffic at the railway station has been suspended for several days, the company said.

Julien Joly, a transport and mobility expert at the consulting firm Wavestone, said collisions between trams were rare.

“The accident occurred in the worst place on the network, in a tunnel and in a very dense area,” he added.

But Joly also said commuters could be reassured that trams remain “a safe mode of transport.”

Strasbourg was the first major French city to reintroduce trams in 1994, after the service was closed in 1960.



PRAGUE (AP): A fire broke out in a restaurant in northern Czech Republic, killing six people and leaving six others with serious injuries, officials said Sunday.

Firefighters said the U Kojota restaurant in the city of Most, some 100 kilometers (63 miles) north of Prague, was still

open when the fire started before midnight Saturday. Police and firefighters said the likely cause was a gas heater that overturned.

It took more than 60 firefighters until 1 a.m. to get the fire under control. The injured were treated in hospitals in Most and nearby cities. An investigation was underway.

Interior Minister Vit Rakusan, who visited the site Sunday morning, said some 30 people were evacuated from the restaurant and a nearby apartment house.

Most Mayor Marek Hrvol said it was the worst such tragedy in the city’s recent history.

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## California wildfires devastate Altadena: How one man tried to save his block

ALTADENA, California, (Reuters): Flames were licking his fence, he was choking on smoke, and bullets were whizzing by his leg. Despite it all, Tristin Perez never left his Altadena home during the deadly Eaton fire.

The 34-year-old carpenter felt he had no choice but to stay despite the life-threatening conditions. A police officer told him and his neighbors to evacuate early on Wednesday morning as the fire raced down the hillside above them.

Instead, Perez insisted on trying to save his property and his neighbors’ homes along El Molino Avenue. But he didn’t even have a garden hose. He

ripped the filters from two water pitchers and doused the ground, his wooden fence and every ember he could reach.

“Your front yard is on fire, palm trees lit up – it looked like something out of a movie,” Perez told Reuters in an interview in his driveway. “I did everything I could to stop the line and save my house, help save their houses.”

His one-story yellow duplex survived. So did two more homes next door. Across the street, entire houses burned to the ground. A single brick chimney stood alone in the wreckage.

“When you look across the street... If I wasn’t here,

that is what would have happened,” he said. “I felt so bad for them. It’s absolutely awful.”

Perez mourned the losses here. He moved to Altadena three years ago and rented his two-bedroom unit. He fell in love with the tranquil and tight-knit community of about 40,000 people north of Los Angeles, where neighbors are friendly and look out for each other.

As of late Saturday, officials said the Eaton fire was 15% contained, and that the fire threat remains high across the Los Angeles area. Overall, six simultaneous blazes that have ripped across Los Angeles County neighborhoods

since Tuesday have killed at least 16 people and damaged or destroyed 12,000 structures.

Eleven of them were killed in the Eaton fire here. The death toll is expected to grow when firefighters are able to conduct house-to-house searches.

In Altadena, fire crews were walking house to house with shovels, looking for hot spots that were still burning. Sheriff’s deputies patrolled the streets and blocked residents from returning to their homes at checkpoints.

**F A S T - M O V I N G FLAMES**

Perez provided a harrowing account of how the Eaton fire rapidly intensi-

fied early on Wednesday. The first indication something was wrong came on Tuesday evening. His neighbors were outside staring at a faint glow far in the distance.

“To be honest, I didn’t really consider it too much of a threat just because it was way out there,” he said.

Then the winds began to howl and blow toward them. The fire was coming right at them at alarming speed. “It looked like it was sprinting down a football field. It was flying,” Perez said.

Then he and his neighbors lost sight of the flames. Perez said that was the most nerve-wracking part of the night.

That soon changed. Looking up his street 200 yards away, entire homes and businesses were engulfed in flames. Perez told his neighbors to leave. “I was willing to go to the end. I saw the firefighters, everybody was already short-handed, so I wanted to do my part,” he said.

Fire and law enforcement officials discourage people from staying at their homes during wildfires because it can put residents and first responders in danger.

But Perez felt he had a shot to fight off the flames because there was an empty, mostly dirt lot between him and the advancing fire. The down-

side was that his neighbors on the north side also stored boxes of ammunition on their property.

Soon explosions began erupting. Breathing became unbearable. Perez felt something whiz past his leg while standing in his yard. The fire had ignited the bullets stored next door, posing fresh danger.

“Bullets flying, gas tanks exploding, embers raining down, you can’t see anything,” Perez said.

He kept dousing his property for hours through the night. His home is still standing. Many others weren’t as fortunate as thousands of structures were destroyed around him.

**‘HOW TO REBUILD’**

Around the corner, Pablo Scarpellini stared at the burned ruins of his wife’s Spanish immersion preschool, Rayuela. The entire building had collapsed, and a small playground slide sat half-melted in the back.

“It’s devastating,” Scarpellini told Reuters. “But I’ve cried so much the last few days, now my vision is more of hope and trying to visualize how to rebuild it.”

He said his wife, Liliana Martinez, the preschool’s founder and director, was scrambling to find an alternative for her 15 students. “We’re doing as much as we can to relocate the kids,” he said.

Perez, wearing a black



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## Forest fires char homes of rich and ordinary

The Los Angeles wildfires this week razed to the ground the wealthy and glitzy neighbourhood of Pacific Palisades apart from Eton County, and firefighters say that the fires could slow down and subside over the weekend because the wind speeds have moderated.

A new danger has however emerged with the winds changing direction and heading towards the northeast neighbourhoods of Los Angeles. Pacific Palisades has been home to celebrities from Hollywood and millionaires, including the real estate agents. Each one has a sad tale to tell, of families raised, of children spending happy times. The firefighting officials are hesitant to single out the reason as to why the fires started off.

They have ruled out lightning, electric wires brushing against each other and causing sparks. It is not even garbage fire that led to the conflagration. There is also the possibility of the fire starting in the forest when pine needles jostle against each other. The officials want to wait to ferret out the evidence if there is one from the charred remains in the forest and in the neighbourhoods.

About 150,000 have been evacuated and another 160,000 could be asked to vacate as an emergency measure. The rich and the poor are equally grieved over their burnt homes. But there are apprehensions of the not-so-well-off that their insurance claims are likely to be overlooked or rejected as the big insurers are likely to pay attention to the claims of the rich folk. So far about 11 people are found to be dead during the fires.

As the evidence stands today, no one can be blamed. The most likely culprit could be climate change because there is the distinct possibility that the heat could have triggered the fires.

But there is as yet no evidence to show that it is the higher temperatures that lit the fire. What is however clear is it is the wind speeds that caused greatest damage. First, the fires spread fast and wide. Second, the firefighters were helpless in containing the fire because they were helpless in the face of gusty winds. One of the firefighting officials' helpless comment was that one has to wait for the wind to slow down so that the fires could subside.

Forest fires have been a regular occurrence in California, but the fire that wrecked parts of Los Angeles was the deadliest in memory.

After the fires subside the arduous task of rehabilitation of people who have lost homes and the reconstruction of the wrecked neighbourhoods would begin. There will be hassles for the people and haggling with the insurance companies.

It will be necessary for the state government and local authorities to take steps to clean up the destruction and help people to get back on their feet.

Outgoing President Joe Biden had declared the fires to be a major disaster and assured that the federal government will bear the expenditure of restoration for six months.

Meanwhile, rescue missions from neighbouring states as well as Canada across the border have been rushed to Los Angeles to help the local firefighting machinery to cope with the disaster. The obvious precautionary measure to be taken by the state and local authorities is to detect the forest fires quickly enough to contain them. But it is no easy task.

Technologies like the drones have to be pressed into service to detect fires, and there should be other ways of ground surveillance through satellite imagery. Forest fires have never been on the top of the agenda because they seemed much too localised. But all over the globe, from the Australian forest hinterlands to the Amazon, forest fires have taken on menacing proportions. There is no way of ignoring them.

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## Trump 2.0 can open the door for a greener world

Gabriel Leão

Last year was disastrous for the environment and climate change action. United Nations-backed talks to tackle biodiversity, plastic pollution desertification and climate change either collapsed or produced grossly inadequate agreements. The re-election of Donald Trump for another term in the United States signalled that the pushback against climate action would only intensify.

All this came in a year that broke the record for the hottest and for the first time average global temperatures surpassed the limit set by the Paris Agreement: 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

As we start 2025, the prospects for meaningful climate action seem bleak. But the anti-climate policies of Trump 2.0 and the intransigence of other major state and corporate polluters could also drive momentum from the rest of the world for radical change. Indeed, 2025 could open up space for the Global South to drive climate action and it only makes sense that Brazil – as the host of this year's COP30 – should lead the way.

Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva was returned to power two years ago on a promise of social and environmental change. After initial successes, however, his administration has lost momentum. This year could be Lula's last opportunity to make good on his promises, take the lead globally on climate change and ensure that his legacy as a change-maker will go beyond Brazil's borders.

### Failed promises

During his presidential campaign, Lula heavily emphasised his rejection of his right-wing predecessor Jair Bolsonaro's anti-environment and anti-minorities policies and promised to reverse them, focusing on the conservation of the Amazon and the protection of vulnerable communities, including the Indigenous.

After his victory, he appointed climate activist Marina Silva to head the Environmental Ministry and Indigenous leader Sonia Guajajara to head the new Indigenous Affairs Ministry. At his inauguration on January 1, 2023, he walked with prominent Indigenous leader Chief Raoni, who has become the symbol of the fight to preserve the Amazon rainforest.

Three weeks later, he visited the Yanomami community, which was devastated by land grabs, violence by illegal miners and loggers, food insecurity and disease. He called their plight a genocide and promised to take immediate action.

Climate change also became a pillar of his foreign policy. At the COP28 held in Dubai in 2023, where countries from the Global South were pushing for progress on climate action, Lula declared: "Brazil is willing to lead by example."

There were some initial achievements. In the first six months of Lula's presidency, Amazon deforestation dropped by 33.6 percent. The police and military were deployed to crack down on illegal mining and

within a few months, there was a sharp drop in the number of illegal mines operating. In May, the Brazilian Institute of the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources issued a ban on oil exploration off the coast of the Amazon Delta.

But Lula's government failed to keep up the momentum. The security operations against the illegal miners slowed down, which allowed them to resume activities. Death rates among Yanomami children continued to increase and Indigenous communities continued to suffer.

The progress made on deforestation started to slow down and in August

and devastating Indigenous communities; some 37.42 million acres, or about 15.1 million hectares, burned. Despite the unprecedented scale of the crisis, Lula did not declare a state of emergency, which would have helped local authorities have easier access to federal resources to deal with the crisis.

### Last chance to act

When Trump returns to the White House in Washington, he is certain to make good on his promises to rescind environmental regulations and clear the way for dirty industries to pollute as much as they want. Other rich countries and corporations are already rolling back their own climate commitments.

**When Trump returns to the White House in Washington, he is certain to make good on his promises to rescind environmental regulations and clear the way for dirty industries to pollute as much as they want. Other rich countries and corporations are already rolling back their own climate commitments. In this environment of complete disregard for the ongoing climate catastrophe and the plight of those most affected by it, the world needs a leader who can take decisive action. For two years now, Lula has been giving beautiful speeches about the need to act on climate change, the need to protect the poor, and the need to set the record straight between those responsible for the climate disaster and those who bear its brunt. It is time for him to put his words into practice. It is time for him to lead by example as he declared back in 2023. He has all the human and natural resources at his disposal to do so. Brazil is home to the Earth's largest rainforest and to nearly 1.7 million Indigenous people who know how to protect and care for nature.**

2024, deforestation rates rose again. Meanwhile, the expansion of land for agriculture and cattle breeding did not stop; it just shifted to the Cerrado savanna, where deforestation does not make headlines as the Amazon does.

Meanwhile, the Lula administration has been pushing for the completion of the BR-319 highway that is supposed to connect the northern states of Amazonas and Roraima to other parts of Brazil. Construction cuts through the Amazon and would have a disastrous impact on the environment and Indigenous communities.

Lula has also publicly spoken in favour of oil exploration off the Brazilian coast, all while Brazil faced some of its worst floods and wildfires. His governments' actions on those have also faced criticism.

From January to October, wildfires swept through Brazil, destroying large swaths of the Amazon rainforest and the Pantanal

In this environment of complete disregard for the ongoing climate catastrophe and the plight of those most affected by it, the world needs a leader who can take decisive action. For two years now, Lula has been giving beautiful speeches about the need to act on climate change, the need to protect the poor, and the need to set the record straight between those responsible for the climate disaster and those who bear its brunt.

It is time for him to put his words into practice. It is time for him to lead by example as he declared back in 2023. He has all the human and natural resources at his disposal to do so. Brazil is home to the Earth's largest rainforest and to nearly 1.7 million Indigenous people who know how to protect and care for nature. They know what needs to be done to preserve this remarkable carbon sink, as they have the lowest carbon footprint of us all. They need to be

made part of not just the urgent action needed to protect their communities, but also Brazil's overall climate and environmental policies.

Listening to the Indigenous people, as well as the scores of environmental experts and activists, some of whom are already in Lula's administration, would mean that the president would have to give up on some traditional ties with big business.

Lula's Workers Party (PT) is known for its addiction to fossil fuels. It is time to put an end to it. Although Brazil's public oil company, Petrobras, is an important economic player, it should not dictate the government's environmental and economic policies. Given how low the price of setting up renewable energy production is, Brazil can invest in a massive expansion of wind and solar. Petrobras is already making such investments; instead of insisting on further oil drilling, it can double down on solar and wind and become the country's leading renewable energy company.

Lula will also have to break free from Big Agribusiness's toxic influence. There is a way to farm and raise livestock without deforestation and pollution. Pushing this industry to adopt sustainable, green practices will not destroy it; it would make it more resilient to the inevitable climate disasters that will strike the country.

The same goes for the mining sector. Lula's government has already made some efforts to regulate it and stamp out illegal practices, but it needs to go all the way. Illegal mining in Indigenous territories and nature reserves must be eliminated.

The government could create a task force that includes the federal and state law enforcement agencies with the intelligence branch and the military to focus on this issue. They could recruit not only Indigenous people to help them but also those impoverished people drawn into illegal mining because of unemployment. Eradicating illegal mining would not only preserve the rainforest and protect Indigenous communities, but it would also deal a heavy blow to organised crime.

Indeed, strong policies on climate and nature preservation will benefit not only the natural environment but also Brazil's people. They would open up more job opportunities that are safe and dignified – a major demand of the PT's electoral base.

Leading radical change at home would give Lula more credibility to do so on the global stage. Words backed by action can have a powerful impact.

At a time when the people of the world feel abandoned by their political elites, demonstrating a commitment to climate action and the wellbeing of vulnerable communities can mobilise millions and create enough momentum to push inert governments into motion.

This could be Lula's global legacy if he has the courage to pursue it.

## Lebanon stands to benefit as Hezbollah, Syria and Iran weaken

Mohamed Chebaro

It is no secret that Lebanon's fate and stability have always been at the mercy of the delicate equilibrium of communal internal forces, the regional Arab balance of power, Israel, and the Palestinian conflict – as well as Iran and its revolutionary agenda in recent decades.

Rarely have those forces aligned in a way that set the Lebanese state on track for peace, stability, rebuilding and reforming in the interest of all those influential forces at the same time.

Middle East theory books have often argued that the game of musical chairs applies most to this region, where there is always one extra player left without a chair, often scuppering the party for the rest. This analogy applies most to Lebanon and its many competing, even warring, communities, as events have often left one of them without a chair at the table.

This week's election of Joseph Aoun, the fifth army commander to become president in Lebanon's history, begs the question of whether he will be able to usher in an era that could pull the country from the brink, or if he will merely serve as a caretaker president, managing the demands of its corrupt political elites, their expectations, and those of their communities.

**The weakening of Hezbollah and its master, Iran, in last year's war with Israel, coupled with the fall of Bashar Assad's regime in Syria, have no doubt been key factors in breaking Lebanon's long-deadlocked parliament to reach a consensus and elect a new president who has the confidence of the international community.**

Will he be able to be a Foad Chehab, the late president of Lebanon from 1958 to 1964, who rose to power after modern Lebanon's first mini civil war, fought over the issue of aligning Lebanon with Nasserite Arabism's anti-Zionist, pro-Palestinian rhetoric, or with the Western-led Baghdad Pact championed by the US in the interests of peace and prosperity?

This surely remains to be seen. The weakening of Hezbollah and its master, Iran, in last year's war with Israel, coupled with the fall of Bashar Assad's regime in Syria, have no doubt been key factors in breaking Lebanon's long-deadlocked parliament to reach a consensus and elect a new president who has the confidence of the international community.

The new president's inbox and the to-do list of his soon-to-be-appointed government are colossal, aiming to meet the lowest threshold of Lebanese expectations after years in which state institutions have been in the wilderness of the imposed trilogy of "people, army and the resistance."

Making a break with such a formula that legitimized the use of force by an extrastate actor is key to understanding how and where Lebanon's reboot under Aoun could go.

Hezbollah's acceptance of Aoun's election underlines that it no longer dictates the political agenda in light of the regional geopolitical shifts since Hamas's misjudged adventure on Oct. 7, 2023 and its aftermath, which led to the weakening of Iran's influence in the region.

The political defeat of Hezbollah follows its devastating military setback over the past 14 months. And under the ceasefire terms with Israel, the Lebanese army continues to deploy in the south as Israeli troops are set to withdraw. The test is whether Hezbollah will agree to dismantle its remaining military infrastructure south of the Litani River and pull its remaining forces 30 km from the border.

Between now and the nomination and swearing-in of a new government, political fighting is likely to continue between two trends – those who want to reconstitute the Lebanese

political landscape afresh, and those who want to refloat and reposition the hegemon of a corrupt, discredited political elite that, under Syrian tutelage and direct Iranian guidance, devastated the Lebanese state and its institutions over four decades.

The latter successfully emptied Lebanon's coffers, collapsed its banking system, took its people to war in Syria, fought Israel repeatedly on behalf of Iran, impoverished its people and pushed many into exile. Additionally, they opened the country to mafia-like money-laundering cartels, drug producers and smugglers, positioning Lebanon as a pariah state.

As a result, Western and Arab countries refrained from providing a lifeline to the country, apart from the minimum necessary to keep its quasi-security apparatus and basic infrastructure afloat, serving the people against all odds.

The new president committed in his speech on Friday to a "policy of neutrality" and to improving Lebanon's relations with Arab countries that have ostracized it for years due to Hezbollah's axis of resistance agenda.

The test, no doubt, will be his ability to deliver on his pledge that the state will

have a monopoly on bearing arms, signaling a difficult path ahead to disarm Hezbollah, which has kept its weapons since the civil war ended in 1990 to fight Israel, even after Israel's unilateral withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000.

Early indicators as to the new Lebanese president and the prospects for Lebanon will surely be seen in the composition of the new government – whether it will be a uniform executive body or if pressures will be exerted to compose it in a way that reflects the communal, sectarian and political quotas and divides imposed by the traditional political elite dominated by the pro-Hezbollah forces.

The early key appointments to be initiated by the new government ahead of the forthcoming general parliamentary elections in the spring are likely to reflect whether Lebanon will be on a healing path, or if the old symptoms persist. Appointments of the heads of the security and administrative apparatus will be key indicators and a telling sign of the parliamentary elections.

Hezbollah, it is said, allowed the election of the new president Aoun to go ahead only after receiving assurances about the name of the next head of the armed forces and the implementation of the ceasefire agreement's tenets or limits with Israel, which could raise alarm bells.

The role played by the US, France, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, which lobbied for the election of Aoun, should be applauded. However, those nations ought to prepare for the long road ahead, paved with thorns, if Lebanon is to be stable and prosperous. Threats from Iran, which is unlikely to abandon its anti-Israel and pro-resistance rhetoric and actions, could scupper all efforts for a neutral but prosperous Lebanon.

It will be up to Aoun, with his military background, to persuade Hezbollah to abandon its weapons – a daunting task, to say the least. But that is the test the new president cannot fail. Otherwise, Lebanon's historic opportunity to reinstate peace, security and stability, and rebuild its economy and banking system to attract tourism and investment, especially in its newly found energy reserves in the sea, could be lost once again.



# Libya is now the launchpad for Russia’s renewed ambitions

The aftermath of Syria's long civil war has sent shockwaves throughout global geopolitics that have seen Moscow redeploy key assets to Libya, signifying a deliberate recalibration of strategic priorities. With this move, Russia is not merely shifting military resources; it is shaping Libya into a central hub for long-term power projection. This development comes amid rising competition among great powers in the Middle East and North Africa region, where Russia seeks to forge new economic and security alliances.

Libya, with its geostrategic proximity to Europe and rich energy reserves, offers Russia the ability to enhance its geopolitical leverage in the Mediterranean. Moscow's maneuver also reflects an intention to foster ties with key players, including Gen. Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army, positioning itself as a major actor in resolving or perpetuating conflicts depending on its interests.

The decision to refocus efforts on Libya teases Russia's broader ambitions amid a global rebalancing of alliances in the ash and rubble of the Assad regime's collapse. The Arab region's rising geostrategic significance has drawn Russia back to assert influence that echoes Soviet-era ambitions. While Russian trade and arms exports in the region have traditionally lagged behind those of the US and China, its actions in Libya represent an effort to bolster its foothold beyond military priorities.

This repositioning takes place within a complicated mesh of regional politics, involving interplay with nations such as Egypt and Turkiye, impacts on global energy markets, and even disruptions to international commerce. By embedding itself even deeper in Libyan affairs, Moscow is not only

addressing immediate strategic needs that were interrupted in Syria, but also seeking to craft a durable foundation for long-term influence in an evolving international order.

Libya, located just 400 miles from Europe's southern shores, offers Russia a prime geographic position for asserting its influence over both the Mediterranean and the volatile regions of the Sahel. This strategic realignment is not merely about filling the void left by its withdrawal from Syria but also recalibrating its broader geopolitical strategy. Unlike in Syria, where Russia's mili-

Hafed Al-Ghwell

deliberate pivot. This investment places Russian forces in a pivotal role to influence conflicts in Mali, Burkina Faso, and the Central African Republic, where control over resources and political allegiances are constantly in flux.

Thus, Libya is a launchpad for Russia's renewed ambitions across Africa, backed by a robust military and economic strategy that ties its palpable Mediterranean influence with deeper incursions into the African continent.

Moreover, Moscow's increased presence in Libya

an economic dimension to its military strategy. As NATO contends with an increasingly assertive Russia in eastern Europe, the Mediterranean emerges as a sophisticated secondary theater where Moscow can dilute the alliance's focus and resources, compelling NATO to adopt a more dispersed and defensive posture.

Additionally, what makes Libya particularly fertile ground for Russian exploits is its fractured political environment, with power divided between the UN-recognized government in Tripoli and the eastern forces led by

balancing Western interests in North Africa, the Sahel and sub-Saharan Africa. Moscow's entrenchment in Libya reflects broader ambitions to bolster its status as a consequential player on the African continent via the Mediterranean region.

In contrast to its earlier efforts in Syria, where the primary goal was to prop up the Assad regime, Russia's engagement in Libya appears more multi-dimensional. It is not merely about sustaining a friendly government but about establishing a broad-based strategic presence. This involves integrating military diplomacy with economic initiatives, thereby embedding itself deeply within the Libyan infrastructure, broader regional politics, and the wider African continent's evolving dynamics.

Thus, Libya emerges as more than just another arena for Moscow's tactical maneuvers against Western influence; it is the linchpin of Russia's renewed approach in a restless part of the world. Redeploying assets from Syria to Libya indicates a calculated bet on the long-term strategic dividends that Libya offers. Such a bet is emblematic of Russia's broader goal to establish itself as a counterweight to its geopolitical rivals. Furthermore, by maintaining a robust presence in Libya, Russia can pivot more dynamically between diverse theaters of operations, ensuring that its global role continues to adapt in an increasingly fragmented world.

Libya has now transformed from an oil-rich battleground for quarrelsome local factions to a cornerstone of Russia's ambitions. As Moscow reconfigures its operational posture in this part of the world with Libya at its center, it is quickly redefining the North African country's geostrategic importance even as its frustrating political gridlock persists.

# US must rethink its Middle East strategy

Dr. Turki Faisal Al-Rasheed

The Middle East has long confounded US policymakers, challenging their perceptions of stability and democracy. President Joe Biden's administration, like its predecessors, has grappled with the illusion of a quiet region. Just days before the Oct. 7 attacks, National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan expressed satisfaction with the relative calm in the Middle East.

This echoes previous misjudgments, such as former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's assertion of stability in Egypt shortly before the dawn of the Arab Spring, and President Jimmy Carter's characterization of the Shah's regime in Iran as an "island of stability." Each such instance illustrates a recurring lesson: The Middle East's quietude often masks deeper unrest.

Despite the belief among some that US administrations can pivot away from the complexities of the region, the truth remains that the Middle East continually commands attention. Under Biden, the initial tranquility in Gaza belied the underlying tensions that had festered.

Historically, American leaders have viewed the Middle East as a distraction from more pressing global issues, often prioritizing alliances with autocratic regimes over fostering genuine democratic movements. This pattern has perpetuated a cycle of dependency and repression, stifling the aspirations of millions.

Before the Arab Spring, the notion of "linkage theory" suggested that resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict was essential for wider regional progress. However, the uprisings revealed that citizens in fact prioritized their own governments over external issues such as Israel, and therefore sought to directly address domestic grievances such as economic hardship, corruption, and lack of political freedom.

While this shift in focus was promising, it also highlighted the disconnect between US policy and the aspirations of Middle Eastern populations. The uprisings demonstrated that although the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a significant factor, it is not the sole determinant of regional stability.

Today, Israel remains central to US interests in the region. However, the prioritization of Israeli security has often come at the expense of the democratic aspirations of Arab nations. Many Arab populations harbor anti-Israel sentiments, and democratic elections could lead to governments that are more aligned with these views.

As a result, support for autocratic regimes has become a strategy for maintaining regional stability, even at the cost of suppressing democracy. This reveals the paradox in which the US promotes the pursuit of democracy, while simultaneously bolstering leaders who undermine it.

This dynamic has further contributed to friction between the US and Israel. Many US officials recount Israeli skepticism about American efforts to pro-

for reassessment of US policy, and his message remains relevant in the present geopolitical climate.

Critics might argue that Carter's approach, particularly his emphasis on human rights, occasionally overlooked practical considerations and strained relations with key regional allies. His advocacy for Palestine, while significant, sometimes alienated those necessary for achieving comprehensive peace, demonstrating the inherent obstacles to his vision. Such tensions reflect a broader challenge in US-Middle East relations: the delicate balance between the promotion of human rights and maintaining crucial alliances.

Despite these critiques, Carter's post-presidential humanitarian efforts shifted public perceptions and provided a model of leadership steeped in integrity and an unwavering pursuit of peace. His legacy serves as a challenge to present-day leaders, urging them to value the welfare of others ahead of personal and geopolitical ambitions when navigating the complexities of Middle Eastern relations.

As tensions rise once again, it is crucial to remember that the promise offered by authoritarian stability is often illusory. The path forward for the Middle East lies in embracing democratic principles that respect the aspirations of its people. The authoritarian regimes propped up by US support frequently lack the legitimacy that comes from genuine public consent.

Acknowledging the complexities of the region, intertwined with democracy and autocracy, will enable the US to contribute to a more stable and just Middle East.

The challenge lies in resisting the allure of repeating past mistakes. Acknowledgment of the fact that the status quo is often unsustainable is essential to foster genuine dialogue and promote lasting peace.

As the region navigates its future, recognition of the fact that true stability can only emerge from inclusive governance that respects the voices and rights of all citizens is imperative.

Moving forward, the US must recalibrate its approach to emphasize support for democratic movements, while simultaneously addressing the legitimate concerns of Israelis and Palestinians.

The intricate dynamics of US-Middle East relations call for a reassessment of long-standing policies. The pursuit of stability through autocracy is a short-sighted tactic that ultimately undermines the prospects for peace. By embracing democratic values and recognizing the diverse voices of the region's populations, the US can position itself as a constructive force in efforts to foster a more stable and equitable Middle East.

It is time to embrace a new approach, one that prioritizes the aspirations of the people and acknowledges that true stability can be achieved only through democratic governance and mutual respect.

# Fears grow over future of Al-Aqsa prayer halls

Loud alarm bells are sounding in the royal court and waqf offices in Amman and Jerusalem as to the plans of radical Israeli groups, with staunch support from the Benjamin Netanyahu government, regarding Al-Aqsa Mosque.

The attempts of Israelis to take over part or all of the 144-dunum, UNESCO-protected world heritage site are not new. A look at the behavior of the Israeli groups that daily infiltrate the mosque with heavy security protection and the latest action of praying on the Al-Aqsa esplanade by Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir reflect this concern.

Ironically, despite the eroding status quo regarding the administration of the mosque, the Israeli government keeps falsely claiming that its commitment to the status quo agreement has not changed. The status quo is a set of 18th and 19th-century Ottoman firmans (edicts) regarding the administration of holy sites in Jerusalem. The most important of these decrees was an 1852 firman

Daoud Kuttab

A right-wing Israeli site, Makor Rishon, published on Monday a chart claiming a 14 percent increase in Jewish "visitors" to the mosque area, which is called the Temple Mount by Jews. The chart states that a record 58,149 Jews entered Al-Haram Al-Sharif in 2024, up from 50,098 the previous year. During the same period, the number of non-Jewish tourists visiting Al-Aqsa went down from 363,020 to a mere 32,031.

Nowhere is this concern more acutely felt than in the clear lust by extremist Israeli groups to take over the eastern part of the compound, especially the two buildings that make up the prayer halls of Bab Al-Rahmeh. Radical Israeli groups visiting the mosque area are often taken to this section, where they are spending unusually extended periods of time. The Islamic waqf guards and even general Muslim worshippers are forcefully kept away by the Israeli soldiers guarding these groups.

While the Jordanian-run waqf department that manages the holy site has shown flexibility regarding the visits during noning a 14 percent increase in Jewish "visitors" to the mosque area, which is called the Temple Mount by Jews. The chart states that a record 58,149 Jews entered Al-Haram Al-Sharif in 2024, up from 50,098 the previous year. During the same period, the number of non-Jewish tourists visiting Al-Aqsa went down from 363,020 to a mere 32,031.

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Israeli groups an incentive to try and create irreversible facts on the ground in Al-Aqsa, and it appears that taking over Bab Al-Rahmeh is their top priority. An Israeli peace activist told this writer that he has seen blueprints at a West Jerusalem engineering office that include the conversion of the Islamic Bab Al-Rahmeh prayer halls into a two-story synagogue that will be easily approachable using the closed gates that are on the eastern side of the mosque. While such ideas might have seemed absurd years ago, the gradual erosion of previously accepted arrangements appears to be coming true.

Public statements and warnings by the Jerusalem waqf council and the Jordanian Ministry of Islamic Waqf, as well as numerous resolutions by UNESCO, have had negligible effect on the plans of radical Israelis to redraw the borders of Islam's third-holiest mosque and make parts of it a Jewish synagogue.

# Jimmy Carter redefined his legacy after his presidency

Yossi Mekeberg

Amid the sadness upon hearing of the passing of former US President Jimmy Carter on Dec. 29, there were many fond memories of his unique contribution to the American people and humanity as a whole, much of which took place in the decades that followed his time in the White House.

He and his wife Rosalynn, who died in November 2023, dedicated their lives to public service and, first and foremost, to the well-being and prosperity of their fellow human beings, very often the less-fortunate ones. The Carter Center, the motto of which is "Waging peace, fighting disease, and building hope," ensures their legacy will live on.

Carter was a single-term president but even upon defeat by Ronald Reagan in 1980, his honesty, decency and adherence to the values most dear to him shone through. During his farewell address, he said, in the spirit of the Founding Fathers: "In a few days, I will lay down my official responsi-

bilities in this office to take up once more the only title in our democracy superior to that of president, the title of citizen."

This remained his leit-motif for the rest of his life: Power is temporary, no one is automatically entitled to it, and even as an ordinary (well, almost) citizen, he could still contribute to the betterment of society.

Moreover, he felt that one should seek power in order to serve, and upon losing the presidency, while he was finding a new purpose in life, he declared that a smooth transition of power was paramount so "that the American people are served well."

Two events in the Middle East largely shaped Carter's presidency, one for better, the other for worse. The former was the peace agreement between Israel and Egypt in 1978. This might not have been an American initiative but Carter and his administration nevertheless identified an exceptional opportunity for Washington to harness

its unique position and help both sides cross the finishing line.

In one of those history-making events that until then had seemed impossible, he succeeded where so many others had failed. Reaching this agreement required patience, dedication, and a readiness to employ America's powers of persuasion, along with a profound conviction about the good in people and the ability to appeal to their better nature.

Despite the enormous strains on this peace agreement, which has been tested more than ever in the past 15 months, it still stands, and for this Carter deserves much of the credit — although its marginalization of the Palestinian issue is beyond regrettable.

The 1979 Iranian tumult was the other history-determining event that occurred during Carter's time in office, and it was one that would ultimately end his hopes of winning a second term. As a result of the tensions between his human

rights convictions and his realpolitik, his personal friendship with the Shah of Iran, and pressures arising from vested interests, he ended up sending mixed messages and failing to understand the magnitude of the events.

Things got worse for the US, and Carter himself, when Iranian students seized control of the US Embassy in Tehran and took more than 50 Americans hostage. The diplomats were held for 444 days, and a failed military operation to save them cast a further shadow over Carter's time in office.

Unfortunately, these events eclipsed some of his real successes on the international stage, including his signing of the agreement for the US withdrawal from the Panama Canal, which contributed to improved relations with Latin America, and the part he played in restoring diplomatic relations with China.

Carter's commitment to

human rights was a major feature of his presidency. After he left office, and for a period of more than 40 years, he established an enduring legacy that was free of party politics, highlighted his deeply caring character, and showed his panache when it came to exploiting, in the most positive and constructive sense and for noble causes, his position as a former president.

Unlike many of his successors he was not looking to cash in on his celebrity status. He and his wife continued to live in the same modest abode in the small town of Plains, Georgia, where they had both been born and made their home after they married.

They might have come from a small town but their mission to improve the world was on a global scale, without boundaries. As much as their fundraising and drawing attention to crucial human rights and humanitarian issues, it was the personal example set by

the Carters, in rolling up their sleeves and doing such work on the ground with people less than half their age, that made them so remarkable and enhanced their reputation.

Since 1984, for instance, for one week every year, they had joined volunteers from Habitat for Humanity, a nonprofit organization that helps people around the world build or improve their homes. The Carters demonstrated their building skills, whether in the US or far-away places such as Thailand or Vietnam, working shoulder-to-shoulder with thousands of volunteers to improve the conditions of people living in poverty.

However, it is the Carter Center in Georgia that is the greatest representation of the massive impression the former president and his wife made on humanitarian and development work, along with efforts to advance freedom, democracy, and peace.

Over the years, the center has observed more than 100 elections in 39 coun-

tries, helping to ensure they were free and fair. It has become a standard-bearer for respecting the processes and results of many elections in which trust was a commodity in short supply.

Furthermore, the Carters understood that unless people's lives and health are safeguarded, the importance of efforts to guarantee political and human rights is diminished, and so they involved themselves in initiatives to improve global public health.

The Carter Center has been at the forefront of efforts to tackle tropical diseases, for example by leading an international campaign to eradicate Guinea worm disease. The result is that there is the real prospect that it will soon become only the second human disease in history, after smallpox, to be eradicated; and for the first time this would happen without the use of vaccines or medicines, but through health education and improved water sanitation brought about by the distribution of

millions of water filters.

Carter had a rare ability to move seamlessly between big-picture domestic and international politics while never losing sight of how the decisions made in those arenas affect individuals in their daily lives. This was true of his approach to nuclear disarmament, for example, or as one of the first world leaders to foresee while in office the impending climate cataclysm.

Carter's work was also informed by his deep religious beliefs and his faith in humanity and human beings. He asserted that "the bond of our common humanity is stronger than the divisiveness of our fears and prejudices."

It will be a long time before we see another public servant with such vision, devotion, altruism, decency, and modesty. However, whether individuals are in positions of power or simply going about their daily lives, the long and fulfilled lives of Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter offer inspiration to us all.



# FPCCI team’s visit to Bangladesh set to boost trade relations

LAHORE (APP): Convener of the Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry’s regional committee on Food, Shahid Imran praised the timely decision by FPCCI to send a Pakistani business delegation to Bangladesh, which he believed will enhance the long-awaited trade volume between the two countries.

Speaking to a delegation of traders led by Mian Azhar Shoukat, here on Sunday, he highlighted the growing Bangladeshi econ-

omy and Pakistan’s diverse industrial base as key factors for building mutually beneficial trade relations. The delegation’s focus will be on showcasing Pakistan’s strengths in textiles, surgical instruments, and agriculture, while exploring Bangladesh’s strengths in ready-made garments and ICT.

Shahid Imran emphasized that the FPCCI delegation’s visit, led by FPCCI President Atif Ikram Sheikh, demonstrates the shared commitment of both

nations to strengthening economic ties, promoting regional cooperation, and achieving sustainable growth.

The outcomes of this visit, he said, would pave the way for stronger trade relations, increased investment, and enhanced economic collaboration between Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The delegation will engage in business-to-business (B2B) interactions, explore joint ventures and investment opportunities,

and facilitate knowledge exchange on trade policies and regulations. The visit will also include meetings with Bangladesh’s Chief Advisor Dr. Muhammad Yunus and Commerce Advisor Sheikh Bashir Uddin.

He also stressed the immense potential for boosting trade in diverse industries between Pakistan and Bangladesh, both members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

## Impressive \$17.8bn remittances in 6 months to support account balance

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: As the remittances to Pakistan have hit a record high in first six months of the current fiscal year the Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) has said that foreign remittances flows are crucial which can support the country’s account balance amidst low volumes of foreign direct investment and constant growth of exports.

PIAF Chairman Faheemur Rehman Saigol, in a joint statement issued here today along with senior vice chairman Nasrullah Mughal and vice chairman Tahir Manzoor Chaudhry, observed that overseas Pakistanis sent 33 percent more remittances in the first six months of July and Dec the current fiscal year (FY25), compared to the same period of the previous fiscal year.

According to experts, workers’ remittances recorded a significant inflow of \$3.1 billion during December 2024, marking a year-on-year growth of 29.3% and a month-on-month increase of 5.6%.

Cumulatively, remittances reached an impressive \$17.8 billion during the first half of FY25 (H1FY25), reflecting a 32.8% rise compared to \$13.4 billion received in H1FY24.

Faheemur Rehman Saigol said that it is expected that remittances to exceed \$35 billion by the end of this year.

The primary sources of remittances in December 2024 were Saudi Arabia at \$770.6 million, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) sending \$631.5 million, the United Kingdom issuing \$456.9 million, and the United States of America sending \$284.3 million, according to SBP.

Tahir Manzoor Chaudhry attributed this remarkable surge in remittances to three key factors: narrowing the black market and interbank gap, stabilising the rupee against the dollar, and the robust performance of the Pakistan Stock Exchange.

Nasrullah Mughal said that the Special Investment Facilitation Council implemented administrative measures to minimize the difference between the black market and interbank exchange rates, encouraging formal remittance inflows, he said. A stable rupee, with a 1% appreciation against the US dollar in 2024, and the SBP’s efforts

to build foreign exchange reserves (now standing at \$11.7 billion), reduced speculative activity. By curbing boom-bust cycles, this policy incentivized the diaspora to send remittances through formal channels.

The PIAF Chairman added that the PSX emerged as one of the top-performing markets, further boosting investor confidence.

He projected a consistent remittance run rate of \$3 billion per month from January to June 2025, potentially driving total inflows to exceed \$35 billion by the end of FY25?an increase of 35% compared to the previous fiscal year, which saw a 29% rise.

The PIAF leadership highlighted that enhanced control over leakages has significantly boosted remittances. Efforts to regulate the open and grey markets have been instrumental in improving formal remittance inflows.

Administrative measures implemented by the interim government and maintained by subsequent administrations have begun yielding results, particularly in curbing the smuggling of goods and currency by border mobs, which previ-

ously undermined remittances. Tightened immigration policies and improved documentation have further contributed to this positive trend, he said.

The government has effectively controlled the disparity in dollar-rupee parity across the open market, grey market, and interbank rates by enhancing documentation and cancelling licenses of non-compliant entities. For the first time, law enforcement agencies (LEAs) and bank officials were apprehended in operations against Hawala and Hundi networks.

They recalled the dire situation two years ago, when the grey market dollar rate was as high as Rs350, the open market at Rs335, and the interbank rate at Rs317. The discussions revolved around the possibility of the country’s default and the dollar reaching \$500/\$. Today, the rupee stands stable at around Rs278, a marked improvement.

However, they cautioned against policies that excessively favor exporters, referencing the State Bank governor’s statement that \$9 billion was purchased last year to stabilize the dollar.

## SA’s program aligns industrial incentives with investor demand

RIYADH (Arab News): Saudi Arabia is taking a flexible approach to distributing its SR10 billion (\$2.66 billion) standardized incentive program to maximize its impact across industries, according to a senior official.

In an interview with Arab News on the sidelines of the Standard Incentives for the Industrial Sector event, Saudi Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources Bandar Alkhorayef said the program is designed to align with investor demand and deliver optimal returns.

“We are now very flexible with regards to the split between different sectors because we would like to see, you know, how the appetite of the investor and where are the areas where maybe the program needs to focus more and put more effort,” Alkhorayef said.

The SR10 billion standardized incentive program, announced by Alkhorayef in his opening speech, aims to empower

industrial investments and promote sustainable development.

Covering up to 35 percent of a project’s initial investment, capped at SR50 million per project, the program seeks to reduce reliance on imports by targeting sectors with high dependency on foreign products and no local production.

The initiative targets at least 200 projects, focusing on industries where the Kingdom relies heavily on imports.

“From the impact, the impact is mainly going to be on the balance of payment where all of the products that we have targeted are products where we have a lot of imports but there is no local production,” Alkhorayef said.

The objective is to “reduce our imports” while enhancing the industrial

sector’s capabilities through new products and technologies.

The program is inclusive, accommodating foreign and local investors. “Any investor who registers as a Saudi investor doesn’t have to be a Saudi national, so even foreign investors can tap into this opportunity,” Alkhorayef said.

Two key requirements guide eligibility: the project must align with targeted products listed in the program, and the program will contribute up to SR50 million, not exceeding 30 percent of the project’s total investment size.

To ensure effective fund allocation, an inter-ministerial committee with representatives from the ministries of industry, investment, economy, finance, and energy evaluates each project.

“They look at the different opportunities — what does the project bring to the table in terms of value, and then based on that, it’s allocated,” Alkhorayef said.

Unlike previous models tailored for large-scale projects, the current program has been designed to cater to SMEs.

“Today, we had to really design something that is more approachable by SMEs,” Alkhorayef added.

The minister emphasized the program’s focus on chemicals, automotive, and machinery sectors while maintaining flexibility to adapt to changing investor interests.

As part of Saudi Arabia’s Vision 2030 strategy, the incentive program aims to attract high-value investments, diversify the industrial base, and build a globally competitive manufacturing ecosystem.

### Court Notice

In the Court of Sidra Jalal Civil Judge-III/Judicial Magistrate II, Matta, Swat, Case #147/1, Institution 14/10/2024, next hearing date 01/02/2025. Faqir Muhammad etc. Vs Malik Abdullah etc. Notice to defendant. (1) Malik Abdullah son of Amal Khan, (2) Mst. Shahi Merman widow of Amal Khan, (3) Mst. Mastoria daughter of Amal Khan r/o Bar Kas Koza Drushkhela Tehsil Matta, Swat. Whereas, the above named cannot be served in ordinary manner it is therefore proclaimed or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court on 01/02/2025 at 8.30 a.m. Ex parte proceeding will be initiated against you. Issued today on 08/01/2025. Under my signature and seal of the Court.

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry’s (FPCCI) Businessmen Panel (BMP) has denounced the government for not keeping a check on foreign exchange market, as the foreign exchange reserves held by the State Bank of Pakistan has decreased by \$15 million on a weekly basis, clocking in at \$11.70 billion, because debt servicing on foreign loans continues to eat up SBP’s holdings.

FPCCI former president Mian Anjum Nisar said that the exchange rate looks stable, but increasing debt servicing costs have put the economy at risk, as that Pakistan’s economy was stuck in a low-growth trap with poor human development outcomes and increasing poverty.

Overall, the country’s total foreign reserves,

including those held by commercial banks, dropped by \$30.9 million, or 0.19%, to stand at \$16.38 billion.

Reserves held by commercial banks also saw a decline, falling by \$15.6 million, or 0.33% WoW, to settle at \$4.68 billion.

Despite the weekly contraction, SBP-held reserves have witnessed significant growth in the current fiscal year, rising by \$2.31 billion, or 24.56%. However, on a calendar-year basis, the reserves have posted a slight decrease of \$15.3 million, or 0.13%.

The foreign exchange reserves have remained a key indicator of Pakistan’s economic stability, particularly amidst ongoing challenges in external financing and currency market volatility. Experts note that maintaining adequate reserve levels is crucial for meeting international obligations and stabilizing the local currency.

The central bank’s reserves, which provide an essential cushion against economic shocks, have shown resilience over the fiscal year. However, fluctuations such as these underscore the importance of prudent external account management amid evolving global economic conditions.

Mian Anjum said the economic conditions leave Pakistan highly vulnerable to climate shocks with insufficient public resources to finance development and that international experience suggests that domestic debt repaying did not always work unless associated with sharp and sustained structural reforms. He said the IMF had identified the need for reforms over three to four decades ago, but they were still pending. With the formation of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), the gov-

ernment aims to bring up to \$100 billion in investments in the next three to five years, particularly from the Middle East.

Memorandums of understanding (MoUs) have been signed with the UAE, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia for billions of dollars, which has helped stabilise the domestic market while the stock exchange has been crossing one milestone after another. While these funds could bolster the SBP’s reserves, ongoing debt servicing may continue to erode them.

The BMP chairman pointed out several times that the State Bank has been buying dollars for debt servicing and to keep the reserves at the current level. This buying has resulted in a tight grip over imports, which fell by 17.3 percent year-on-year to \$21.5 billion during the first six months of the current fiscal year.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor selling seasonal fruits at stall in weekly Sunday Bazaar Aabpara in Federal Capital.

### Pak-China plastic industry conference concluded

BEIJING (INP): The Pakistan-China Plastic Industry B2B Investment Conference concluded successfully in Guangzhou with 8 Pakistani companies and 44 Chinese companies attending both online and offline.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Sardar Muhammad, Acting Consul General of Pakistan in Guangzhou welcomed participants and underscored the significant investment opportunities within Pakistan’s plastic industry.

He encouraged businesses to seize these opportunities to foster deeper cooperation and explore joint ventures that would benefit both nations, Gwadar Pro reported on Sunday.

The conference facilitated numerous business meetings, resulting in the signing of 8 MoUs.

Participants expressed their satisfaction with the event’s organization, noting it provided an excellent platform for connecting businesses from both countries, fostering partnerships, and discovering new avenues for mutual growth.

### Political stability key to sustainable economic growth: Iftikhar Malik

LAHORE (APP): Former President of the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry Iftikhar Ali Malik emphasized on Sunday that political stability is a fundamental factor for achieving sustainable economic growth, as it creates an environment of predictability, security, and trust. In a press statement issued here, he highlighted that a stable political environment promotes long-term planning and attracts both domestic and foreign investments.

He noted that when governments operate smoothly, enforce the rule of law, and implement consistent policies, the business community gains confidence, driving investment, expansion, and overall economic development.

Iftikhar Ali Malik further stated that political stability is not merely a facilitator, but a prerequisite for the drawing foreign investors and boosting the confidence of the business community. In its absence, economies face uncertainty, stagnation, and missed opportunities for growth.

“Foreign investors are particularly sensitive to political instability, as it increases the risks of sudden policy changes or disruptions due to social unrest. A politically stable nation assures investors of the safety of their investments and the likelihood of a predictable return,” he said, adding that economies with stable governance structures, such as those in many advanced nations, tend to attract higher levels of foreign direct investment (FDI) than regions plagued by political turmoil.

He pointed out that political stability fosters an environment conducive to entrepreneurship and innovation. Confident businesses are more willing to take risks, invest in new technologies, and hire more employees, all of which drive productivity and contribute to a growing economy. “These elements are crucial for restoring and maintaining confidence, especially during times of global economic uncertainty. Stable governance enables governments to focus on long-term economic planning, infrastructure development, and social programs that improve the quality of life for people,” he added.

### 5th Pakistan-Africa trade moot in Ethiopia:

## PFC to showcase Pakistani furniture

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) will participate in the 5th Pakistan-Africa Trade Development Conference and Single Country Exhibition, set to take place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from January 15. The three-day event aims to strengthen trade ties between Pakistan and African nations and showcase the country’s growing industries, particularly its vibrant furniture sector.

Mian Kashif Ashfaq expressed optimism about the event, noting Africa’s vast potential for expanding furniture exports. The exhibition will help promote

Pakistan’s innovative designs and superior quality on an international level.

He further mentioned that the expo, organized by the Federal Ministry of Commerce and Trade Development Authority, seeks to enhance bilateral trade relations with African countries. PFC’s participation underscores its commitment to enhancing Pakistan’s economic footprint globally, particularly in emerging markets like Africa, and contributing to the country’s export-led growth, he added.

## Saudi Arabia de-risks investments: Al-Falih

RIYADH (Arab News): Saudi Arabia is de-risking investments for foreign small and medium-sized enterprises to encourage their entry into the Kingdom, according to a senior official.

In an interview with Arab News on the sidelines of the Standard Incentives for the Industrial Sector program, Saudi Minister of Investment Khalid Al-Falih said the initiative aims to attract international SMEs that have for decades been integral to supply chains in their home countries.

The announcement follows a joint effort by the ministries of industry and mineral resources and investment to allocate SR10 billion (\$2.66 billion) to activate standardized incentives for the industrial sector.

This initiative, approved by the Cabinet last month, seeks to empower industrial investments, foster sustainable development, and enhance Saudi Arabia’s global industrial competitiveness.

“De-risking is a key component. Come to Saudi Arabia. We will de-risk the investment for you,” Al-Falih said, emphasizing the government’s commitment to creating a business-friendly environment.

He added: “We will do matchmaking with the Saudi investors, and then they can, hopefully, recreate, and maybe we innovate with them to do something bigger for what they are doing in their home country.”

The program also aims to build value chains by encouraging international SMEs to collaborate with

local Saudi firms, fostering innovation and shared growth.

“I think the Kingdom has been doing well in attracting large multinationals. However, when we go to Germany, we find out 70 to 80 percent of the German GDP is by SMEs, who may only operate in Germany and Europe. They don’t know the Middle East. They don’t know Saudi Arabia,” Al-Falih said.

“As we build these value chains, we need to help our SMEs in Saudi Arabia by bringing with them some international SMEs that have been doing some of this production and manufacturing, feeding the large OEMs (original equipment manufacturers) for decades in their own home country.”

While Saudi Arabia has successfully attracted large-scale investments in multibillion-dollar projects like the green hydrogen initiative, Lucid, and Ceer, Al-Falih noted that mid-sized companies face unique challenges. These include a lack of credit history, limited local ecosystems, and rising costs of funding and production.

“By us having this tool available to us, if it’s a new product, differentiated product, that will plug a missing component or a link in a value chain, we can do it quickly, and these companies will be able to bridge that gap and move quickly, so that’s the intention,” he said.

## BMP for keeping check as debt servicing eats up forex reserves

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry’s (FPCCI) Businessmen Panel (BMP) has denounced the government for not keeping a check on foreign exchange market, as the foreign exchange reserves held by the State Bank of Pakistan has decreased by \$15 million on a weekly basis, clocking in at \$11.70 billion, because debt servicing on foreign loans continues to eat up SBP’s holdings.

FPCCI former president Mian Anjum Nisar said that the exchange rate looks stable, but increasing debt servicing costs have put the economy at risk, as that Pakistan’s economy was stuck in a low-growth trap with poor human development outcomes and increasing poverty.

Overall, the country’s total foreign reserves,

including those held by commercial banks, dropped by \$30.9 million, or 0.19%, to stand at \$16.38 billion.

Reserves held by commercial banks also saw a decline, falling by \$15.6 million, or 0.33% WoW, to settle at \$4.68 billion.

Despite the weekly contraction, SBP-held reserves have witnessed significant growth in the current fiscal year, rising by \$2.31 billion, or 24.56%. However, on a calendar-year basis, the reserves have posted a slight decrease of \$15.3 million, or 0.13%.

The foreign exchange reserves have remained a key indicator of Pakistan’s economic stability, particularly amidst ongoing challenges in external financing and currency market volatility. Experts note that maintaining adequate reserve levels is crucial for meeting international obligations and stabilizing the local currency.

The central bank’s reserves, which provide an essential cushion against economic shocks, have shown resilience over the fiscal year. However, fluctuations such as these underscore the importance of prudent external account management amid evolving global economic conditions.

Mian Anjum said the economic conditions leave Pakistan highly vulnerable to climate shocks with insufficient public resources to finance development and that international experience suggests that domestic debt repaying did not always work unless associated with sharp and sustained structural reforms. He said the IMF had identified the need for reforms over three to four decades ago, but they were still pending. With the formation of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), the gov-

ernment aims to bring up to \$100 billion in investments in the next three to five years, particularly from the Middle East.

Memorandums of understanding (MoUs) have been signed with the UAE, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia for billions of dollars, which has helped stabilise the domestic market while the stock exchange has been crossing one milestone after another. While these funds could bolster the SBP’s reserves, ongoing debt servicing may continue to erode them.

The BMP chairman pointed out several times that the State Bank has been buying dollars for debt servicing and to keep the reserves at the current level. This buying has resulted in a tight grip over imports, which fell by 17.3 percent year-on-year to \$21.5 billion during the first six months of the current fiscal year.

This steep decline in imports with a slight improvement of exports reduced the trade deficit. Not only are the importers in trouble, but the State Bank has grossly restricted the profits outflows, he said.

Pakistan received just \$524 million in FDI during July-Dec, an annual increase of just 6.8 percent. Adding to the concerns, the country’s foreign debt and liabilities rose by \$3.48 billion, reaching \$128.09 billion in the first quarter of FY24.

Mian Anjum Nisar said the economic conditions leave Pakistan highly vulnerable to climate shocks with insufficient public resources to finance development and that international experience suggests that domestic debt repaying did not always work unless associated with sharp and sustained structural reforms. He said the IMF had identified the need

for reforms over three to four decades ago, but they were still pending.

The exchange rate is no longer deteriorating as it was until the end of August, thanks to the army-sanctioned actions against illegal dollar trade and unchecked smuggling to Afghanistan. The current account deficit is contained, and the haemorrhage of foreign exchange reserves stopped for now. The primary surplus target for the first quarter of the present financial year has been achieved.

Nevertheless, this reduction in volatility has come at a heavy cost to economic growth, public and private investments, and jobs.

The major structural challenges how to control debt accumulation and current account deficit without suppressing growth, increase one of the world’s lowest tax to GDP ratios of less than 9 percent, boost

industrial and agricultural productivity and exports, manage resources through public sector entities, settle circular debt in the power sector without further raising the electricity prices and so forth remain undressed.

He was of the view that Pakistan should resist the temptation to use short-term measures like domestic debt restructuring and attracting one-time investment without addressing the country’s big picture issues through reforms aimed at improving the larger business climate, taxation, human capital and business competitiveness.

He said that such steps could help once or twice, but it was no solution to Pakistan’s challenges, which could only be addressed by improving the business climate, providing a level playing field and removing distortions and tax exemptions.





In brief

Naqvi reviews renovations

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Mohsin Naqvi on Sunday visited the Gaddafi Stadium to review the ongoing upgrades, renovations, and finishing work. He directed officials to expedite the completion of the renovation project ahead of the Champions Trophy. During the visit, Naqvi emphasised the importance of promptly completing the drainage work and expressed satisfaction with the progress. He stated, "Gaddafi Stadium, equipped with all modern facilities, will be ready this month. The work is progressing at a swift pace." He further added, "We are installing brand-new, comfortable seats to enhance the fans' experience, along with new LED lights on the towers. Fans can also look forward to laser light shows during night games. The installation of new scoreboards is underway as we aim to make the ICC Champions Trophy a truly memorable event in Pakistan."

Shakib fails bowling action

DHAKA (Agencies): Shakib Al Hasan has failed a second independent test of his bowling action, conducted at the Sri Ramachandra Centre for Sports Science in Chennai. As a result, his suspension from bowling in top-level domestic and international cricket remains in place. The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) confirmed the news, stating, "A successful reassessment is required for the bowling suspension to be lifted. Consequently, the player's existing suspension from bowling in international cricket following the initial independent assessment at the testing centre of Loughborough University in the UK also remains in place." Shakib remains eligible to play as a batsman in all forms of cricket but cannot contribute as a bowler. The initial issue with Shakib's bowling action arose during an English county match in September 2024, leading to his first suspension. According to ICC regulations, the suspension was automatically enforced worldwide. Despite hopes of clearing his action in subsequent tests, Shakib has not been successful. Shakib has not played international cricket since the two-Test series against India in September-October 2024. Political unrest in Bangladesh prevented his return after the tour, as the country faced significant student-led protests that led to the fall of the Awami League government, of which Shakib was a member of parliament.

Rodrigues ton seals India win

RAJKOT (Agencies): India enjoyed a commanding 116-run win over Ireland on Sunday to seal a one-day international series victory in Rajkot. The hosts started the three-match series with a six-wicket win on Friday and comfortably cruised past Ireland in Sunday's second encounter. Jimimah Rodrigues hit 102 and Harleen Deol added 89 as India posted a commanding total of 370-5. It proved too much for the Irish, although with 254-7 they registered their highest ODI score against India and Christina Coulter Reilly shone with a maiden international half-century as she finished on 80 as Ireland's build-up to the match was overshadowed by teenage spinner Aimee Maguire being reported for a suspected bowling action in Friday's first ODI.

# Habib makes history as first Lebanese to win Grand Slam



MELBOURNE (AFP): Lebanon's Hady Habib made history Sunday at the Australian Open by becoming the first player from his country to win a Grand Slam match. World number 219 Habib is the only Lebanese ever, man or woman, to come through qualifying and reach the main draw at one of the four majors. The 26-year-old continued his fairytale run with a 7-6 (7/4), 6-4, 7-6 (8/6) victory over China's Bu Yunchaokete in front of a frenzied crowd out on Court 13. He was draped in the Lebanon flag as he signed autographs after the match.

"This is probably one of the best days of my career honestly," said Habib. "It's such an incredible feeling to get this win not only for myself but for Lebanon and Lebanese tennis. "As you guys could see there, the crowd was absolutely wild. It made it even more special to win in front of them." Born in America to a Lebanese father, Habib lived in Lebanon for a few years from the age of six and has been representing the country since he was 15 when he first played in the Davis Cup. Habib also wore the Lebanon colours proudly at last year's Paris Olympics

where he lost in the first round to Carlos Alcaraz. "There were definitely more people at the Alcaraz match," smiled Habib. "I think there were more Lebanese people today, so it felt a little more special. "The support I've been getting these last couple days has been incredible. My phone has been absolutely blowing up. "I actually have some family from Sydney that came out to watch. It's been a special time for me to have all the Lebanese people join in the community," he added. "Yeah, I felt the energy out there." His reward is a second-round match against France's 14th seed Ugo Humbert. "It's a huge win, especially what we've been going through as a country," said Habib. "I think to bring something positive, especially we've been having a rough time with obviously the war. We had our other issues in the past. It's just nice to get this win for Lebanon and for the people. "This is the biggest achievement I've had in my entire career."

# Afghanistan announce squad for CT

KABUL (Monitoring Desk): The Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) revealed on Sunday their 15-member squad for the ICC Champions Trophy 2025, scheduled to be held from 19 February to 9 March in Pakistan and the UAE. Top-order batter Ibrahim Zadran, having recovered from an ankle injury, marked his return to the national team. Mystery spinner AM Ghazanfar replaced Mujeeb Rahman, who decided to prioritise his recovery by focusing on T20 cricket. The squad also included Sediquallah Atal, who was named player of the series during a recent ODI series against Zimbabwe, where he amassed 156 runs, highlighted by a century and a half-century. – Ashraf confidant of Afghanistan's potential – ACB Chairman Mirwais Ashraf lauded the team's performance in recent international tournaments and expressed optimism about their prospects. "AfghanAtalan have performed exceptionally well in the past two ICC events,

the CWC23 and the ICC World T20 2024," Ashraf stated. "Their success will undoubtedly boost their morale and help them deliver an even better campaign this time." Ashraf announced the appointment of former Pakistan captain Younis Khan as the team's mentor. "Given the success of having mentors in the last two events, we look forward to benefiting from Younis Khan's extensive international experience," he added. – Mujeeb's absence explained – Interim Chief Selector Ahmad Suliman Khil provided clarity on Mujeeb Rahman's exclusion from the squad. "Mujeeb was not available for selection as his doctor advised him to focus on T20s to ensure a full recovery before returning to ODIs. This was also the reason he missed the recent series against Zimbabwe," Khil explained. He highlighted the team's preparedness for the Champions Trophy, emphasising their familiarity with conditions in Pakistan and

the UAE. "We will conduct a preparation camp in multiple phases before the tournament. Expectations are high, and I hope the team will deliver strong performances, just as they did in the last two World Cups," Khil stated. – Afghanistan's squad for the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 – Hashmatullah Shahidi (Captain), Rahmat Shah (Vice-Captain), Rahmanullah Gurbaz (WK), Ikram Alikhil (WK), Ibrahim Zadran, Sediquallah Atal, Azmatullah Omarzai, Mohammad Nabi, Gulbadin Naib, Rashid Khan, AM Ghazanfar, Noor Ahmad, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Naveed Zadran, Fareed Ahmad Malik. Reserves: Darwish Rasooli, Nangyal Kharoti, Bilal Sami – Key fixtures – 21 February: Afghanistan vs South Africa in Karachi 26 February: Afghanistan vs England in Lahore 28 February: Afghanistan vs Australia in Lahore.

# Macuga wins a WC super-G race

ST. ANTON (AP): Breakout star Lauren Macuga and comeback queen Lindsey Vonn made it a classic Sunday for the United States ski team. Macuga's first World Cup race win — in a super-G where the 40-year-old Vonn impressed again in fourth — was no surprise to ski watchers who saw the 22-year-old American's fast-improving results. Maybe now sponsors will catch up with a racer from what shapes to soon be the first family of the extended U.S. sk team. Macuga raced with speed and style Sunday wearing a helmet that has a question mark on the front where a sponsor's brand could be. The American was almost flawless on a course that caught out veterans like Federica Brignone and Lara Gut-Behrami, who made errors and knew crossing the finish line their times would not hold up. Macuga won by 0.68 seconds — a huge winning margin in super-G — ahead of Stephanie Venier of Austria, with Brignone 0.92 back in third. Olympic champion Gut-Behrami was 1.26 back in fifth. "I can't believe it, it's so exciting," Macuga said. "I don't even think the nerves have settled in. I'm just waiting for it to hit me." Vonn, in the third race of her surprise comeback season, trailed Macuga by 1.24 yet no one was faster down the steep middle section of the course. "It was a crazy run today," Vonn said. "I'm also really proud of my teammate Lauren. It's really nice to be part of such a fun team. It's great to see another American



Macuga's 30th start while Sunday was Vonn's 396th on the circuit, a career that began in a November 2000 slalom at Park City — Macuga's home town. The pair posed for Polaroid photos together in the finish area, where Vonn chatted with former U.S. downhill racer Travis Ganong and Italian star Sofia Goggia, who for the second straight day skied out when set to post the fastest time. Vonn's performance Sunday was further away from the winning time than Saturday in her first downhill for six years, won by Brignone, yet was perhaps more impressive. On Sunday, Vonn was genuinely fast through an unfamiliar gate-setting and in much poorer visibility on a cloudy day than the sun-splashed downhill raced on a course that is well-known and where she had won in 2007. "It was really bumpy, the light was really flat when I went," said Vonn, who returned from a six-year retirement and is now skiing with a titanium knee. "I think it was a really good step forwards. (Saturday) gave me a lot of confidence." The shocking star of Saturday, Swiss prospect Malorie Blanc who was runner-up on her World Cup downhill debut, confirmed that form in super-G with a ninth-place finish. It is proving to be a rich and intriguing season in the women's World Cup that now moves on to its signature venue — scenic Cortina d'Ampezzo in the Italian Dolomites that will host women's races at the 2026 Olympics.

# ICC delegation visits Gaddafi Stadium to assess readiness for Champions Trophy

LAHORE (APP):A six-member International Cricket Council (ICC) delegation Sunday visited Gaddafi Stadium Lahore to assess venue's readiness for the ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025, to be hosted by Pakistan from February 19 to March 9. The delegation comprised of ICC officials, broadcasters, and logistics personnel and it reviewed facilities including the media boxes, dressing rooms, and enclosures at the venue.

The visit will provide the delegation with the first hand information on the state of affairs at the venues in Pakistan. It reviewed PCB's readiness for the ICC event. PCB's Director International Cricket Usman Wahla briefed the delegation on the ongoing upgradation work at the stadium. The Chairman PCB Mohsin Naqvi recently claimed that the things were in place for the inauguration of the upgradation work on January 25. The PCB has further

relocated the tri-nation ODI series featuring South Africa and New Zealand to the Gaddafi stadium Lahore and NBP stadium Karachi to further satisfy the ICC on the preparedness for the mega event. The tri-series matches will also help PCB put the upgradation work to the litmus test and see whether there are some shortcomings so that these may be rectified prior to the start of the ICC Champions Trophy on February 19. The ICC delegation has already

visited NBP stadium, Karachi and Rawalpindi stadium, Rawalpindi.

# India's cricket board elects Devajit Saikia to top job



MUMBAI (AFP): India's powerful and hugely wealthy cricket board on Sunday elected its new chief, former player and advocate Devajit Saikia, the only person nominated to the top post. "Devajit Saikia is declared duly elected as the Secretary of BCCI", the Board of Control for Cricket in India said in a statement. Saikia, 55, succeeds Jay Shah who left the position to become chairman of the International Cricket Council, the global governing body. Businessman and state cricket administrator Prabhtej Singh Bhatia has been appointed BCCI treasurer, the board added. Shah's departure last month to become chairman of the ICC prompted the appointment of Saikia, who was already on the BCCI board as interim secretary. An unknown among fans after a modest playing career, Saikia has close ties with India's ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Saikia began in administration by serving as general secretary of a cricket club in the north-eastern state of Assam under the leadership of Himanta Biswa Sarma. Sarma is now Assam's chief minister for the BJP, which has governed India nationally since 2014 under Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Saikia and Sarma both later served in the Assam state cricket association. When Sarma was tapped to lead the state, he appointed Saikia his advocate general -- the government's chief legal adviser.

# Pakistan Shaheens & West Indies warm-up match ends in draw

ISLAMABAD (APP): The three-day warm-up match between Pakistan Shaheens and the West Indies concluded in a draw on Sunday at the Islamabad Club Ground, chasing a target of 312 runs. Pakistan Shaheens finished at 128 for 2 in 30 overs.

Opening batsman Mohammad Huraire, who is also part of the Test squad impressed with a quick-fire 80 runs off just 80 balls including 12 fours and 2 sixes. This followed his earlier innings of 74 runs, contributing to an 82-run partnership with Omair Bin Yusuf who scored 25 runs.

In their first innings, Pakistan Shaheens declared at 212 for 9, trailing by 134 runs. West Indies then batted for 40 overs in their second innings, scoring 177 for 5 before declaring, setting the Shaheens a challenging target.

West Indies had a shaky start, falling to 25 for 3 and later 73 for 5, but Alick Athanaze (58 not out) and Tevin Imlach (57 not out) rescued the innings with an unbeaten 104-run partnership for the sixth wicket.

For Pakistan Shaheens, Musa Khan took 2 wickets for just 5 runs while Ali Raza also picked up 2 wickets for 32 runs.

The West Indies Test squad will now travel to Multan where their first Test match begins on Friday, 17 January.

# Shi Yuqi secures Malaysia Open title



KUALA LUMPUR (AFP): China's Shi Yuqi captured the Malaysia Open men's singles crown after a dominant 21-8, 21-15 victory over Denmark's Anders Antonsen in Kuala Lumpur Sunday.

In doing so, the world number one extracted revenge over his world number two opponent, having lost in straight games at the 2024 edition. The 28-year-old Shi was a different proposition in this one-sided Super 1000 final, needing only 39 minutes for victory in front of a full house at the Axiata Arena. Shi needed only 15 minutes to secure the opening game thanks to his strong start.

Shi's cross court returns proved to be his strong suit, as they left the 27-year-old Antonsen flat-footed several times. The Dane started the second game with a neat disguised drop shot that wowed the crowd, and he continued in the same positive momentum to take an 11-9 lead at the interval. But mistakes began to creep in, and when Antonsen conceded another point to trail 11-14, he shouted at himself. A fortunate point from Shi saw the shuttle tumbling over the Dane's court which added to his frustration, and the Chinese ace sealed victory when Antonsen's return went wide.

Shi immediately went to celebrate his first victory of 2025 with his coaches. "I'm definitely happy because it has been a while since a Chinese men's singles shuttler won a title in Malaysia. Last year when I played against him, he was in excellent form, so today I reflected on my past encounters with him and I made sure to prepare thoroughly," said Shi. South Korea's An Se-young, meanwhile, defended her women's singles crown in style after the world number one thrashed China's Wang Zhiyi 21-17, 21-7. In this battle of the world's top two shuttlers, An's class showed throughout as she precisely worked her opponent into submission.

The Paris Olympics gold medalist has now set sights on eclipsing her 10 titles won in 2023. "Breaking my own record is something I want to continue doing. I guess I'm quite ambitious. Winning always gives me tremendous confidence and brings me the greatest joy," she said.

# Spurs avoid FA Cup shock



LONDON (AFP): Tottenham narrowly avoided FA Cup embarrassment against non-league Tamworth as they needed extra-time before securing a 3-0 win in the third round on Sunday.

Ange Postecoglou's side, currently 12th in the Premier League, are 96 places above Tamworth, who sit 16th in the fifth tier National League.

But the supposed gap in quality was rarely apparent as Tottenham's dismal display took them to the brink of a historic humiliation. Tamworth should have caused one of the FA Cup's greatest upsets in normal time but their missed chances proved crucial.

Nathan Tshikuna's extra-time own goal and late strikes from Dejan Kulusevski and Brennan Johnson sent Tottenham into the fourth round.

Tottenham last won a major trophy in 2008, but the under-fire Postecoglou boasts he always wins silverware in his second season at a club. Having beaten Liverpool 1-0 in the League Cup semi-final first leg on Wednesday, Tottenham remain in con-

tion for a domestic cup double. But they will have to improve significantly on the latest underwhelming performance in their troubled campaign.

Tamworth are a part-time team whose players work day jobs alongside their football careers and only train twice a week. Yet they matched their highly-paid and supposedly superior opponents for long periods of a classic FA Cup tie at the Lamb Ground.

It was something of a culture shock for Tottenham to swap the plush arenas of the Premier League for Tamworth's modest 4,000-capacity stadium with a sloping artificial pitch. Fans waved tin-foil replicas of the FA Cup, while locals who didn't buy a ticket were able to peer over the garden walls of houses that backed onto the stadium.

The ramshackle vibe was summed up when kick-off was delayed by a hole in one of the goal nets, with Tamworth's Beck-Ray Enoru fixing the problem by climbing on the shoulders of his team-mate.

Tamworth's Snowdome -

- a notable local attraction featuring ski slopes -- loomed in the distance behind the stadium, but on a freezing, frosty afternoon, it was Tottenham who had trouble keeping their feet.

Tamworth denied the non-league outfit should have been ahead in the opening seconds as Enoru raced through the static Tottenham defence and unloaded a powerful effort that forced a good save from Antonin Kinsky.

Tom Tonks' massive long throws caused problems for lethargic Tottenham's defence and Tamworth went close three times in the final minutes. Jordan Cullinane-Liburd headed just wide before Tom McGlinchey's shot was blocked and Cullinane-Liburd was denied by Kinsky. Tottenham were only the fourth Premier League side since 1992-93 to be taken to extra-time in an FA Cup game against a non-league club.

Tottenham's 101st minute breakthrough was in keeping with their scrappy performance as Johnson's cross deflected in off Tshikuna as he tried to stop Dominic Solanke

# Najmul to lead Bangladesh in Champions Trophy

DHAKA (AFP): Najmul Hossain Shanto will captain Bangladesh in the Champions Trophy in Pakistan and Dubai next month, the cricket board said Sunday, with key players including Liton Das missing the cut.

Former star all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan is also missing from the 15-man squad for the one-day international tournament.

The Champions Trophy takes place in Pakistan and Dubai from February 19 with Bangladesh placed in Group A alongside India, Pakistan and New Zealand.

Bangladesh are ninth in the ICC ODI rankings.

They play their opener against India in Dubai on February 20.

**Bangladesh squad:** Nazmul Hossain Shanto (capt), Soumya Sarkar, Tanzid Hasan, Towhid Hridoy, Mushfiqur Rahim, Mohammad Mahmudullah Riyad, Jaker Ali, Mehidy Hasan Miraz, Rishad Hossain, Taskin Ahmed, Mustafizur Rahman, Parvez Hossain Emon, Nasum Ahmed, Tanzim Hasan Sakib, Nahid Rana.

making contact. Kulusevski killed off plucky Tamworth six minutes later, taking Son Heung-min's pass and firing past Singh. There was still time for Johnson to put a flattering gloss on the score for Tottenham with a clinical finish in the 118th minute. League Two side Doncaster beat Championship strugglers Hull 5-4 on penalties after a 1-1 draw. Later on Sunday, Arsenal host holders Manchester United in a clash between the FA Cup's two most successful sides.





## In brief

### 400 cops deployed

RAWALPINDI (APP): A Rawalpindi Police spokesman on Sunday said that more than 400 police officers and personnel were deployed to provide effective security at the churches. Special teams of the respective police stations, Elite Force and Dolphin Force also performed patrol duties in the surrounding areas of the churches, he added. Senior officers remained alert to monitor that the strict security arrangements for the churches were in place and continuously check the presence of personnel at the place of their duty, the spokesman said.

### Woman commits suicide

ISLAMABAD (APP): A 25-year-old woman allegedly commits suicide by consuming acid in the Nishtar Colony area of Lahore on Sunday due to domestic problems. According to a private news channel and police, the woman was identified as Shaista, who was taken to the hospital after her condition worsened but could not survive. The family has declined to comment on her death. Police have taken the body into custody and initiated legal proceedings.

### Dolphin officer dismissed

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) police have dismissed Dolphin Squad officer Hassan Maqsood over bribery allegations. A police spokesperson told APP on Sunday that the decision was taken under the direct supervision of Dupty Inspector General (DIG) Syed Ali Raza. He said the officer faced allegations of accepting a bribe during a vehicle check. Reportedly, Hassan Maqsood allowed a vehicle with tinted windows to proceed after receiving illegal payment. He added that a complaint was initially lodged by a fellow police officer, prompting the immediate suspension of the accused. A comprehensive departmental inquiry followed, which concluded that the officer was guilty of the charges. Consequently, the officer was terminated from service. "There is no place in the department for corrupt officers," DIG Syed Ali Raza stated. He emphasized that such actions undermine public trust and vowed to maintain a strict stance against any personnel found misusing their authority.

### 30,000 cusecs water released

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 30,000 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 40,000 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1476.47 feet and was 78.47 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 15,900 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1133.70 feet, which was 83.70 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 4,200 cusecs and 100 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 14,600, 14,500, 1,900 and 5,800 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 13,500 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 6,400 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani addresses the closing ceremony of the International Conference on Girls' Education at Jinnah Convention Centre. —APP Photo

## Siddiqui seeks collective efforts to overcome barriers

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training, Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui emphasised the need for collective action to overcome the barriers to girls' education, underscoring the importance of education in empowering women and strengthening communities.

Speaking at the closing ceremony of a two-day global conference on "Girls' Education in Muslim Society: Challenges and Opportunities" on Sunday, the minister reiterated his commitment as education minister to ensure that every child in Pakistan, regardless of gender, socio-economic background, or geographical location, has access to quality education.

"Addressing educational disparities remains a top priority for the government as education plays a vital role in empowering girls, in their prosperity, development and

well-being," the minister added.

Expressing concern over the persistent opposition to girls' education, the minister called on the nation to unite in challenging these entrenched societal norms and attitudes. He stressed that girls' education was not only a moral imperative but also an economic necessity, highlighting that educated girls are better equipped to care for their families and access better job opportunities.

Meanwhile, the minister acknowledged the significant challenges facing girls' education, noting that millions of girls are still out of school in Pakistan.

Highlighting the significant obstacles girls face in accessing education, he said that the government had launched several initiatives aimed at increasing girls' enrolment and improving the overall quality of education nationwide.

The federal minister for educa-

tion, outlined several key measures aimed at improving the quality of education, including teacher training, the construction of new schools, and the provision of scholarships for female students.

He also noted that efforts were underway to enhance school infrastructure, particularly in underserved and rural areas, to ensure better educational opportunities for all students.

He stressed the need to create a society where girls have access to quality education that enables them to reach their full potential.

The minister also highlighted the vital role of parents, teachers and community leaders in promoting girls' education, urging that their contributions be recognised.

He called for collective action to remove the barriers to girls' education and eliminate the existing inequalities in the education system.

## Self-defense training concludes

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a step towards bolstering the safety of Islamabad's citizens, a self-defense course concluded on Sunday at the Police Line Headquarters, where participants were equipped with essential skills to handle emergency situations.

A public relations officer told APP that, following the special directions of IGP Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, self-defense courses were conducted for Islamabad's citizens to enhance their safety and emergency response skills.

He said the closing cer-

emony at Police Line Headquarters saw AIG Investigation/Complaints Syed Inayat Ali Shah distributing certificates to the participants.

During the course, male and female participants impart physical training, weapon handling, swimming, live firing practice, repelling, crossing obstacles, Horse-riding and archery exercises.

Additionally, the participants were briefed on the framework of dealing with difficult situations and their resolution, behavioral assessment,

physical and mental health, besides utilization of resources.

Earlier on, many batches of women and men have completed the training of self-defense courses as well, while during the course, separate classes have been organized for male and female participants also.

The purpose of this course is to promote community policing between Islamabad Police and federal capital citizens and to empower and sensitize them to tackle unpleasant situations.

## Lady thief gang busted; 600,000 rupees recovered

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police, through a successful operation by the Women's Police Station team, arrested a gang of lady thieves involved in theft activities on Sunday. The team recovered stolen goods worth 600,000 rupees from the criminals' possession.

A public relation officer told APP that the Women's police station team used technical and human resources to successfully apprehend the lady thief gang and recovered stolen goods worth 600,000 rupees from their possession.

Case was registered against the gang and further investigation is underway.

DIG Raza said that the Islamabad Police is actively working to ensure the safety of citizens' lives and property in the federal capital, emphasizing that no elements will be allowed to disrupt the peace of the citizens. He added that protecting the lives, property, and dignity of citizens is the top priority of the Islamabad Police.

## Govts, civil society must unite for girls' education: Senate Chairman: Gilani

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani on Sunday urged governments, civil society, and international partners to collaborate in creating an environment where girls are encouraged, supported, and empowered to pursue their education.

While addressing the concluding session of the International Conference on Girls' Education in Muslim Communities held in Islamabad, Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani said that education is not a privilege but a fundamental right. He called on Muslim communities and the international community to renew their commitment to empowering girls through education, underscoring the teachings of Islam and the vision of Pakistan's founder, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who strongly advocated for gender equality and the importance of education for all.

The conference brought together global leaders, including Hissein Brahim Taha, Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Mohammad bin Abdul Karim Al-Isa, Secretary General of the Muslim World League, and distinguished dignitaries such as Nobel Laureate Malala Yousafzai and former Prime Minister of Norway Kjell Magne Bondevik, to discuss the challenges and opportunities for girls' education in Muslim communities.

He said, "The future of any society lies in the education of its youth, particularly girls. We cannot build a prosperous future if we leave half of our population behind." He also paid tribute to the global efforts of Malala Yousafzai, whose advocacy has inspired millions. He reiterated Pakistan's commitment to ensuring that every girl, regardless of background, has access to quality education.

Gilani also highlighted the contributions

of Former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and first women Prime Minister of the Muslim world Benazir Bhutto for women's education and their endeavors for bringing gender equality, social empowerment, and political participation for women in Pakistan. The Chairman said that history reminds that educated Muslim women have played a major role in shaping societies. "Their inspiring stories, charismatic personalities, and determination to contribute to the development of their environment make them beacons that guide young women and men today," he added.

He highlighted that Fatima al-Fihri founded the world's first university, while Razia Sultana ruled with wisdom and strength. They proved that when given the chance, women lead, innovate, and transform the world. Yousaf Raza Gilani said that literacy, especially among women, is a cornerstone of a sustainable and prosperous society. He said that educating girls transforms individual lives and uplifts entire communities by improving health outcomes and fostering economic empowerment, building resilience, promoting stability, and strengthening social cohesion.

He called for advancing the cause of girls' education, emphasizing that the country must embrace a comprehensive approach that combines collaborative action, resource development, and community engagement.

The Chairman urged distinguished scholars and policymakers to translate the invaluable insights and lessons of this conference into tangible, impactful strategies that will inspire change. The conference concluded with the adoption of the 'Islamabad Declaration,' a collaborative framework aimed at addressing key challenges in girls' education.

## NA speaker mourns retired deputy secretary's demise

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq expressed his deep sorrow and regret on Sunday over the passing of Muhammad Ashiq, the retired Deputy Secretary of the National Assembly.

In a condolence message to the grieving family, the speaker conveyed his heartfelt sympathies, acknowledging the profound loss

and immense shock caused by his passing.

The speaker paid tribute to the late Muhammad Ashiq for his dedicated service at the National Assembly Secretariat, describing him as a diligent and capable officer, while recognizing his invaluable contributions to the institution.

He further praised Ashiq's contributions as

"commendable" and extended his full support to the bereaved family, offering his solidarity during this difficult time.

The speaker concluded with heartfelt prayers for the deceased, beseeching Allah Almighty to elevate his status and grant the grieving family the strength to bear this irreparable loss with patience.

## PTI's rigid deadline may jeopardize dialogue process

ISLAMABAD (APP): Coordinator to the Prime Minister, Rana Ihsan Afzal, on Sunday cautioned that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) rigid deadline could jeopardize the dialogue process.

Talking to a private news channel, he emphasized that the government was dedicated to resolve issues through dialogue in

the national interest.

He emphasized that the prime minister and the PML-N have consistently supported constructive talks as a way to address the nation's political and economic challenges.

Rana Ihsan further stated that political stability is a prerequisite for achieving economic stability and progress.

When questioned about the 190-million-pound case, he clarified that it is solely a matter for the courts to decide and should not interfere with the ongoing dialogue.

He stressed that the case has no connection with the government, urging all parties to focus on the greater good of the country.

## 11 outlaws arrested; drugs, weapons, and liquor seized

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police apprehended 11 criminals involved in different criminal activities, including drug peddling and possessing illegal weapons recovered drugs, liquor and weapons with ammunition from their possession on Sunday.

A police spokesperson told APP that the Islamabad Police Kohsar, Karachi Company, Sabzi Mandi, Noon, Khanna, Bani Gala, Shams Colony and Koral police station teams took legal action against accused involved in drug peddling and possessing illegal weapons and arrested 11 accused.

He said police teams also recovered 3607 gram heroin, 20 liter alcohol, four 30 bore pistol with ammunition and one iron punch from their possession.

SSP Operations/Investigation, said that the Islamabad Police is actively working to ensure the safety of citizens' lives and property in the federal capital, emphasizing that no elements will be allowed to disrupt citizens' peace. Protecting the lives, property and dignity of citizens is the Islamabad Police top priority, he added.

## Murder accused killed in shooting with police

RAWALPINDI (APP): A murder accused was killed in an exchange of fire with a police team in the area of Pirwadhai Police Station while his two accomplices escaped on Saturday night.

A Rawalpindi Police spokesman, in a statement on Sunday, said the deceased suspect Meher Ali was wanted to the City Police in the kidnapping and murder case of his cousin.

The accused had reportedly called the cousin to his house to extort Rs 4.5 million from him, and killed him. He later disposed of the victim's body

by using some chemicals.

The City Police had arrested the accused and recovered Rs 4.3 million from him which he had snatched from the victim. The vehicle used by the victim was also recovered on the identification of the accused. The accused, however, managed to escape from the custody when he was taken by the police to the site of incident Friday evening to collect further evidence of the crime.

The accused Meher Ali along with his accomplices was passing through the area and tried to escape after seeing a

Pirwadhai Police team which was carrying out snap checking on Saturday night. The police chased the suspects, who opened fire on the police party near the Chhati Graveyard.

In the retaliatory fire by the police, Meher Ali was killed while his accomplices escaped while firing. Senior police officers reached the spot on information about the incident.

The body of accused was shifted to a hospital, while a search operation was launched to arrest the absconding suspects, the spokesman said.

## RWMC 'Suthra Punjab' campaign underway

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Waste Management (RWMC) cleanliness drive launched on the instruction of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif was in full swing to keep the division neat and clean.

According to the RWMC spokesman, under the "Suthra Punjab" campaign, cleanliness of all tehsils and districts' urban and rural areas was being carried out regular-

ly. At the same time, waste containers were being repaired and mechanical sweeping of roads, metro bus stations, and washing were also done.

He said that the sanitation staff of RWMC had removed thousands of tonnes of garbage and rubbish from Rawalpindi city and other tehsils of the district. He said complaints received on social media platforms were also being addressed

while cleanliness of metro stations, bus stands, graveyards, and other public places was also underway. He said residents were informed about keeping their surroundings clean through pamphlets, banners, and social media platforms.

In case of any complaint, citizens were asked to register their complaints on helpline number 1139, which would be rectified immediately, he added.



ISLAMABAD: Labourers on the way back after work on a Tractor Trolley. —INP Photo



Imported electricity restored

HERAT (Amu TV): DABS, the country's electricity provider, announced that the technical issue affecting the 220-kilovolt electricity line imported from Turkmenistan to Herat has been resolved, restoring power to the region. In a statement on its X account, DABS explained that the outage occurred in the Baghr-e-Char area of Kushk Rabat-e-Sangi district in Herat province due to heavy snowfall and storms, which disrupted the supply line.

Belarus seeks to boost trade

KABUL (Amu TV): Belarus has expressed interest in expanding trade ties with Afghanistan, according to Ministry of Industry and Commerce, following a meeting between Kazintas Andrei, Belarus's Deputy Minister of Industry and Norouddin Azizi, minister of industry and commerce. Belarusian official emphasized strengthening trade between the two countries and proposed holding joint trade exhibitions and forums to foster "economic and trade relations."

Agreement on Russian gas transit nears finalization

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Industry and Commerce has announced that the groundwork for finalizing a transit agreement for Russian gas to South Asia has been laid. Ministry spokesperson Akhundzada Abdul Salam Jawad noted that the acting minister had discussed the matter during a recent trip to Russia. He said: "In 2022, the ministry leadership proposed the transit of Russian gas to South Asia and regional markets during a visit to Russia, which was positively received. This topic was revisited in early

2024 at the Kazan Summit and during subsequent visits by Russian officials to Afghanistan." Earlier, Russian media reported that Afghanistan and Russia had agreed on gas transit, with the agreement expected to be finalized at the 2025 Kazan Summit. Economic analyst Mir Shakir Yaqubi said: "If this project becomes operational, Afghanistan could gain significant revenue through transit fees. Additionally, such projects will create job opportunities, develop infrastructure, attract domestic investment, and enhance global

trade confidence in Afghanistan." Another analyst, Abdul Ghaffar Nazimi, said: "This project could provide hope to countries under economic sanctions. Its passage through Afghanistan creates significant economic opportunities and strengthens the country's economic potential." The ministry also announced agreements with Central Asian countries, including Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan, on the transit of goods, with these countries expressing their readiness for cooperation.

OCHA: Climate crisis intensifies humanitarian needs in Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has reported that the climate crisis in Afghanistan has intensified the country's humanitarian challenges. OCHA stated this update on Sunday, January 12, on its official X/ Twitter account. The office stated that humanitarian aid alone is not enough for Afghanistan, as the country is also suffering from an environmental crisis. The report highlights that Afghanistan remains "highly vulnerable" to natural disasters, climate change, and geopolitical tensions. These factors exacerbate the existing challenges faced by its population. According to OCHA, environmental changes in Afghanistan worsen with each passing day. In 2024, floods in all 34 provinces affected over 170,000 people. The floods resulted in the deaths of 500 people

and injuries to 800 others. Additionally, tens of thousands of homes were either partially or completely destroyed. According to OCHA, \$6.7 billion in humanitarian aid provided since August 2021 has significantly improved conditions in critical sectors such as food security, healthcare, education, protection, hygiene, and shelter, contributing to a relative improvement in the overall humanitarian situation. While 29.2 million people required humanitarian assistance in 2023, OCHA notes an improvement, with a decline in the number of individuals needing urgent support. Despite this, the report states that 22.9 million people (over half of Afghanistan's population) will still require humanitarian aid in the coming year. OCHA's previous reports reveal that 14.8 million people—roughly one-third of the population—

require food and agricultural assistance this year. Acute food insecurity, coupled with insufficient water, sanitation, and healthcare services, continues to drive malnutrition rates higher. The report underlines the pivotal role of humanitarian aid in reducing suffering and averting a larger-scale disaster. OCHA notes a dramatic decrease in the number of people facing emergency food insecurity. OCHA emphasizes the need for sustained international support and long-term strategies to address Afghanistan's challenges, highlighting climate resilience, governance, and infrastructure. A coordinated approach is vital to combine immediate relief with development for a sustainable future. Since the Taliban regained control of Afghanistan, poverty has deepened, and the country has faced complete international isolation.

Seasonal illness surge overwhelms Paktia hospital



PAKTIA (TOLONews): Simultaneously with the onset of colder weather, seasonal illnesses among children in Paktia province have increased by up to 40%. Officials in Paktia province, while acknowledging certain challenges, have stated that upgrading the 150-bed regional hospital to a 300-bed capacity will address many of the public's health issues. Mohammad Zaman Ahmadzai, head of Paktia Regional Hospital, told TOLONews: "Seasonal illnesses have increased by 30 to 40 percent compared to last year. In addition to patients from Paktia, patients from Khost, Paktika, Ghazni, and Logar

provinces are also brought to the Paktia Regional Hospital. The hospital is operating at full capacity, but we have made the best use of our resources." Miraj Gul Adil, head of Paktia's public health department, said: "The Paktia Regional Hospital has a capacity of 150 beds, but this has been upgraded to 300 beds, although it has not been fully implemented yet. While the number of patients is high, and people from four southeastern provinces visit here, this upgrade must be realized. If this happens, many of our problems will be resolved." Currently, in the children's ward of Paktia Hospital, which has a

capacity of 45 beds, 100 sick children are admitted. Several patients' caregivers have called on health officials and the regional hospital to provide medicine and other healthcare facilities for children. Gul Mohammad, who brought his child from Wazikhwā district to the hospital, spoke about the challenges: "We often buy medicine from outside, and only a small amount is provided by the hospital. The economic problems are overwhelming. If they try a little harder to provide more medicine, it would be better." Noor-ul-Haq, another caregiver, said: "I have had my child admitted here for twelve days, but the facilities in the hospital are insufficient. Especially in this cold weather, many children fall ill. We ask the Islamic Emirate and the relevant institutions to provide more facilities for the hospital." Paktia is among the provinces with harsh winters, and residents of its remote areas have limited access to healthcare and other basic life amenities.

80% of Sar-e Pul residents lack access to clean water

SAR-E PUL (TOLONews): The Directorate of Rural Rehabilitation and Development in Sar-e Pul province has reported that 80% of the local population does not have access to clean drinking water. However, the inauguration of two water supply networks in the province, costing 15 million afghani, has provided clean water to at least 900 families. Director Jummah Haqyar stated: "Approximately 80% of the population faces challenges in accessing potable water. In the Al-Jihad and Sayad districts, there isn't even water within 100 meters." Local residents expressed relief over the newly available water supply: Noor Mohammad, a resident of Sar-e Pul, said: "Previously, we had to fetch water from rivers using barrels and donkeys. Now, with wells dug, water is delivered directly to our homes, solving our problems." Another resident, Zekrullah, said: "During summer months, dry wells caused significant hardship. Now, thanks to the new water supply, we are very grateful." Abdul Wahab echoed similar sentiments: "Previously, 80% of the water was polluted and inaccessible. Now, clean water is available, and everything has improved."

The Directorate of Rural Rehabilitation and Development has called on aid organizations, traders, and investors to establish more water supply networks to alleviate the province's water crisis. KABUL (TOLONews): The spokesperson for the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum, Homayoun Afghan, has announced the completion of nearly three kilometers of the TAPI pipeline in Afghanistan. Speaking to TOLONews, he stated that an additional 3.5 kilometers of the pipeline route has been prepared for installation. Homayoun Afghan said: "Currently, the TAPI project is progressing as planned. To date, 2.9 kilometers of the pipeline have been constructed and weld-

Afghanistan received \$6.7b in aid since 2021

KABUL (TOLONews): The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) reports that Afghanistan has received approximately \$6.7 billion in aid since the Islamic Emirate assumed power in 2021 which has significantly alleviated the country's humanitarian crisis. In its November 2024 Humanitarian Update, OCHA noted that 29.2 million people required aid in 2023. However, improvements in food security, healthcare, education, protection, sanitation, and shelter have since stabilized the situation. Despite these gains, natural disasters, climate change, and geopolitical tensions continue to threaten Afghan lives. According to the report, "Humanitarian efforts have led to a 14-percentage-point reduction in IPC 4 populations and an 8-percentage-point reduction in IPC 3 populations. By November 2024, the number of people in IPC 4 conditions is expected to decrease to 3.1 million, or 7% of the population." The aid has also doubled the number of malnourished children receiving treatment, from 1.1 million in 2021 to 2.2 million in 2023. Furthermore, the number of health facilities rose from 422 in January 2022 to 908 by the end of 2023, significantly enhancing healthcare services. By 2023, 11.6 million people accessed primary healthcare services, compared to 7.9 million in 2021.

Belarus FM discusses political, economic ties



KABUL (Amu TV): Belarus's First Deputy Foreign Minister, Luka Shevich, met with Abbas Stanikzai, the Taliban's Deputy Minister for Political Affairs, to discuss political and economic cooperation, according to a

statement from the Taliban's foreign ministry. The meeting focused on "political and economic commonalities" as well as potential bilateral collaboration, the statement said. The Taliban also quoted Shevich as expressing

Belarus's desire to establish a foundation for cooperation across various sectors. The Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has not issued a statement regarding the meeting. Stanikzai described the visit as a significant step

toward strengthening ties between the two sides, according to the Taliban. Both parties reportedly agreed to continue discussions through technical teams based in Kabul and Minsk to further develop relations.

Progress on TAPI pipeline construction in Afghanistan

KABUL (TOLONews): The spokesperson for the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum, Homayoun Afghan, has announced the completion of nearly three kilometers of the TAPI pipeline in Afghanistan. Speaking to TOLONews, he stated that an additional 3.5 kilometers of the pipeline route has been prepared for installation. Homayoun Afghan said: "Currently, the TAPI project is progressing as planned. To date, 2.9 kilometers of the pipeline have been constructed and weld-

ed, and approximately 3.4 kilometers of the route have been prepared. Property acquisition efforts are also underway." Meanwhile, the Diplomat magazine reported that the Afghan Ministry of Mines and Petroleum continues work on two major projects, TAPI and Mes Aynak, though the likelihood of their success remains uncertain. According to the report, while Afghanistan and Turkmenistan are cooperating on implementing the TAPI project, India has

expressed doubts about its feasibility. Without India's participation, Pakistan's commitment to the project may also falter. The ministry's spokesperson said: "Eighty-five percent of the project's costs will be financed by Turkmenistan, with the remaining five percent each being covered by Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India. Turkmenistan has pledged to pay Afghanistan's share." Potential benefits of TAPI for Afghanistan Economic expert Mohammad Asif Stanekzai

said: "International projects like TAPI can provide Afghanistan with global economic legitimacy and encourage foreign investments by demonstrating the successful implementation of major initiatives." The TAPI project, with an estimated total cost of \$10 billion, is set to transport Turkmenistan's gas through Afghanistan to Pakistan and onward to India. Afghanistan is expected to earn \$400 million annually in transit fees while benefiting from a share of the gas supply.

Turkey sends 21st aid shipment in three years to Afghanistan

HERAT (TOLONews): The 21st shipment of humanitarian aid from Turkey, consisting of over 700 tons of food and non-food items, has arrived in Afghanistan through the Torgundi Port in Herat. This 724-ton shipment includes 4,000 tents, 3,000 blankets, 5,000 kitchen kits, 10,000 food packages, and a quantity of hygiene supplies. Sükrü Can, Deputy Secretary General of the Turkish Red Crescent Society, stated: "These aid supplies have been collected with the support of the

President of Turkey, and through the efforts of the Disaster Management Authority, the Turkish Red Crescent, and other charitable organizations in Turkey, and have been sent to the people of Afghanistan. This aid reflects the friendship and compassion of the Turkish people toward the Afghan nation." Officials from the Afghan Red Crescent Society announced that these supplies will be distributed to those in need across the country. Shahabuddin Delawar,

acting head of the Afghan Red Crescent Society, said: "This aid shipment includes 4,000 tents and other food and non-food items. It is planned that these supplies will be distributed to the most needy people in all 34 provinces and seven regions of the country." Turkish officials have also assured the continuation of their country's humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. Sinan İlhan, Türkiye's Consul-General to Herat, stated: "During the recent earthquake in Herat,

Turkey was the first country to prepare humanitarian aid, and on the second day of the incident, we were here. We stand by our Afghan brothers in difficult times." This is the 21st shipment of Turkish aid to Afghanistan in the past three years. Turkish officials have referred to this initiative as the "Train of Kindness," aimed at supporting Afghanistan's needy by the Turkish people and government. The total aid provided so far has exceeded 9,500 tons.

Afghan women seek end to 'world's silence' in meeting with Aryana

KABUL (Amu TV): At least 100 women and girls from 12 provinces of the country participated in a virtual meeting with Aryana Sayeed, the renowned singer and founder of the advocacy group Equality, Freedom, and Advancement for Women (DEFAW). They called on the international community to redirect aid funding toward creating online universities and empowering women instead of sending financial assistance directly to Afghanistan. The partici-

pants urged the global community to break its silence in the face of escalating restrictions imposed by the Taliban, particularly on women's education. One attendee voiced her frustration, saying, "Why aren't these millions of dollars spent on women? Why aren't they building online universities or schools? My daughter is now suffering from psychological issues. I watch her every day and it breaks my heart." During the discussion, women spoke about the

challenges they face under Taliban rule, including bans on education, psychological trauma, and economic hardships. One woman shared her story of interrupted aspirations, saying, "I worked hard for years to study. I started university, and I was in my second semester when the Taliban stopped us during exams. Later, I tried to study midwifery, even though it wasn't my passion, just to escape the despair. I hadn't even completed my third semester

when that, too, was taken from us." She added that the current situation has driven some women to suicide and pushed many others into severe mental distress. DEFAW, which organized the meeting, said the session highlighted the worsening plight of Afghan women and girls. Participants discussed the psychological and economic toll of the Taliban's policies, which have intensified since their return to power.

Russia says Afghanistan its top flour buyer in 2024

KABUL (Ariana News): Afghanistan became the largest importer of Russian flour last year as it doubled purchases, Russia's state agricultural export agency, Agroexport, said. Afghanistan imports flour as it does not have enough production capacity to fully meet domestic demand, Reuters reported. The increase in imports came as Russia sought to foster ties with Afghanistan's rulers. Last month, Moscow moved a step closer towards recognising the Islamic Emirate government, with Russia's parliament voting in favour of a law that would make it possible to remove the Islamic Emirate from a list of banned terrorist organisations, read the report. Agroexport, citing preliminary estimates, said Afghanistan bought Russian flour worth almost \$80 million last year, double the 2023 level. Russia's total wheat and wheat-rye flour exports reached \$300 million last year, up 3% year on year in value terms and 7% more by volume, according to the watchdog.

4 killed, 2 wounded in Afghanistan last week

KABUL (Pajhwok): Last week, several organisations called on Pakistan to halt the arrest and harassment of Afghan refugees. Instead of heeding such calls, Islamabad once again launched rocket attacks on areas in eastern Kunar province. US President-elect Donald Trump claimed the Biden administration had provided billions of dollars to the Afghan government. However, both the caretaker government in Kabul and the Biden administration rejected this claim as groundless. Casualties: Last week, four people

were killed and two others wounded in various incidents across Afghanistan. According to local sources, an intoxicated man shot dead his two brothers and injured his sister-in-law. In Badakhshan, a man gunned down his mother. In Baghlan, the police chief said that unidentified gunmen shot dead one religious scholar and injured another. During the previous week, one individual had been killed and four others wounded across the country. Before the regime change in 2021, hundreds of civilians, insurgents and

security personnel would be killed and maimed every week. Reactions to Trump's claim On Tuesday, US President-elect Donald Trump strongly criticised the Biden administration, claiming billions of dollars were being transferred to Afghanistan's caretaker government. Speaking at a press conference in Florida, Trump said: "It's not even believable. Billions of dollars, not millions, billions. We pay billions of dollars to essentially the Taliban in Afghanistan. And that's

given by Biden." Hamdullah Fitrat, deputy spokesman for IEA, also rejected Trump's claim, saying: "The reality is that the US has not provided even a single penny in aid; instead, it has frozen the assets of the Afghan people." Fitrat added the IEA did not expect any assistance or support from the United States and would never seek it. In response to Trump, a White House National Security communications advisor clarified the humanitarian aid sent to Afghanistan was specifically intended to reach the Afghan people,

not the IEA. The advisor said: "The aid is systematically organised to ensure it reaches the people of Afghanistan." Iran on water rights Esmail Baghaei, spokesperson for Iran's foreign ministry, said Tehran was utilising all available tools to address this issue of water rights, which is also a priority for Iran's embassy in Kabul. However, Deputy Prime Minister for Political Affairs Maulvi Abdul Kabir, in a meeting with Iranian Ambassador Ali Reza Bigdeli, said the issue of water rights between

Afghanistan and Iran had been resolved through mutual understanding, and irresponsible statements in this regard could negatively impact bilateral relations. The Afghanistan-Iran water treaty was signed in 1972 between Afghanistan's then prime minister Musa Shafiq and Iran's former premier Amir Abbas Hoveyda. Continuation of assistance Luxembourg has pledged \$1.56 million (EUR 1.50 million) and Spain EUR 1 million (US\$1.1 million) in humanitarian aid to Afghanistan last week.



# Islamabad Declaration urges unity to empower girls through education

ISLAMABAD (APP): The international conference on girls' education concluded here with historic Islamabad Declaration on Sunday urging Islamic governments, private institutions and international organizations to prioritize girls' education in national agendas, stressing the importance of combating extremist ideologies and cultural norms that obstruct educational opportunities for women.

"Denying girls their right to education is a grave misuse of religious principles," the declaration asserted, calling for the dissemination of fatwas and resolutions from Islamic councils that affirm women's right to knowledge.

It emphasized that girls' education is not only a religious obligation but also an urgent societal necessity. It is a fundamental right safeguarded by divine laws, mandated by Islamic teachings, reinforced by international charters, and well-established by national constitutions.

"Drawing from the core principles of Islamic education to guide the educational process in harmony with cultural and religious identity, while incorporating national and global insights and knowledge that have advanced education and learning."

"Uniting efforts to safeguard girls' right to education and ensure their empowerment, acknowledging that educated women play a pivotal role in fostering stable families and communities. This, in

turn, promotes global peace, national harmony, and fortifies societies against challenges such as extremism, violence, crime, and atheism."

It further stated that issuing a caution against extremist ideologies, fatwas, and opinions rooted in cultural norms and patterns that obstruct girls' education, which constitute a regrettable perpetuation of societal biases against women. Such actions represent a grave misuse of religious principles to legitimize policies of deprivation and exclusion.

"Mobilizing all resources to support the efforts of Islamic countries in advancing education through improved methods and content, with a particular emphasis on girls' education, ensuring it is placed at the forefront of their national priorities. This initiative aims to ensure equal access to education for all girls and fulfill international commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals."

It stressed for providing free scholarships to offer educational opportunities for girls affected by poverty, conflicts, and social challenges.

It asked for considering with due importance the resolutions of Islamic Figh councils and the fatwas issued by scholarly bodies affirming women's legitimate right to acquire knowledge across diverse fields and educational levels. Priority should be given to disseminating these resolutions and fat-

## Malala slams Taliban's policies; seeks accountability for violating women's rights

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai on Sunday strongly criticised the Taliban for their treatment of women, declaring that the group "does not consider women as human beings" and has deprived Afghan girls of their right to education for over a decade.

She made these remarks during the two-day international conference, Women's Education in Muslim Societies: Challenges and Opportunities, held at the Jinnah Convention Centre in Islamabad.

Hosted by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in collaboration with the Muslim World League, the summit has brought together 150 delegations from 44 countries to address the pressing challenges in girls' education across Muslim-majority nations.

Malala, in her address, expressed grave concerns about the state of women's rights under the Taliban regime. "The Taliban has imposed over 100 laws restricting women's freedoms. For the last decade, they have denied Afghan girls the basic right to education, a fundamental violation of human dignity," she stated.

She emphasised the plight of 120 million girls worldwide who are unable to attend school, including 12.5 million in Pakistan. "Pakistani girls deserve to be part of the colors of the world. Every girl has the right to complete 12 years of education," she remarked.

Criticism of global injustices

Malala also highlighted the destruction of Gaza's education system due to Israeli attacks. "Israel has destroyed the entire education system in Gaza, leaving countless children without access to learning," she said, underscoring the widespread challenges faced by children in conflict zones.

Acknowledging the role of the Muslim World League in organizing the event, she stressed the urgency of forming a united front to address the education crisis and hold governments accountable for their actions against girls.

PM Sharif who inaugurated the conference, underscored the need to build a global network involving governments, Islamic organizations, and civil society to promote girls' education. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Secretary General, Hussain Ibrahim Taha, and Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar also participated in the opening ceremony.

Malala's speech reiterated the importance of addressing the unique challenges faced by Afghan girls and called on world leaders to take firm action. "The purpose of this conference will not be fulfilled if we fail to talk about the education of Afghan girls and hold the Taliban accountable for their crimes against women and girls," she said.

This marks Malala's third visit to Pakistan since she was attacked by TTP militants in Swat Valley in 2012. Her last visit in 2022 focused on raising awareness about the devastating floods caused by climate change.

In her closing remarks, Malala expressed her deep connection to Pakistan. "I started my journey here, and my heart will always remain in Pakistan," she said.

was, while actively addressing and countering perspectives that seek to undermine this fundamental right.

"Promoting the enhancement of digital educational content by urging educational institutions and international organizations to create digital resources that improve girls' access to education."

It said that developing specialized educational programs for individuals with special needs by pro-

viding inclusive learning environments and qualified teaching staff. This approach aims to ensure equal opportunities for academic achievement and social participation.

Encouraging legislative institutions in Islamic countries to actively promote girls' education by drafting and implementing effective laws, regulations, and national policies.

The declaration called on governmental and private media institutions

across the Islamic world to organize awareness campaigns and educational programs that highlight the importance of girls' education. These efforts should be coordinated with educational and media experts and include religious scholars, imams, and guides to effectively address opposition by elucidating the true principles of Islam.

Promoting scientific research and studies on girls' education in Islamic communities. This aims to identify optimal strategies for its advancement and to address the challenges and impediments to its development.

It also commended the pioneering initiative of Sheikh Dr Mohammed bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, Secretary-General of the Muslim World League and Chairman of the Organization of Muslim Scholars, as the initiator of this conference.

He is tasked with the responsibility of communicating all resolutions of the conference, overseeing their implementation, and ensuring the necessary financial and moral support.

His duties extend to Islamic governments,

Assessing Sheikh Dr Mohammed bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, Secretary-General of the Muslim World League and Chairman of the Organization of Muslim Scholars, as the initiator of this conference.

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sive international partnership platform to support girls' education in Muslim communities, through alliances that include UN organizations, governmental bodies, and private entities, is noteworthy.

It declared that anyone who rejects or opposes these well-grounded Islamic religious principles is, by the consensus of this gathering as referenced in the preamble of this Declaration, considered outside the framework of the Islamic Ummah's concepts and cannot be regarded as part of it. It is essential to disavow their ideology, whether they are an individual, an institution, or an entity-public or private.

The conference participants and Frida also send a decisive and clear message to religious platforms, including religious lessons sermons across the Islamic world and in minority communities: It is time end the misrepresentation of Islam and the violation of women's rights.

Assigning Sheikh Dr Mohammed bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, Secretary-General of the Muslim World League and Chairman of the Organization of Muslim Scholars, as the initiator of this conference.

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through His Excellency the Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, in accordance with the terms of the agreement signed between the two parties. Governmental and private educational institutions in Islamic countries and in countries with Muslim minorities.

In conclusion, the conference participants expressed their appreciation to the Prime Minister's Office of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for its efforts in hosting and supporting the event. They also extended their gratitude to the Muslim World League for its exemplary organization.

The participants urged the initiator of the conference to establish a permanent committee to oversee the implementation of the outcomes of this significant event, including the agreements signed, which lay the foundation for impactful action as emphasized in the initiator's opening remarks.

These remarks included the statement: "This initiative, with God's help, will be both effective and tangible through the substantive agreements signed. It will not be a temporary appeal, an empty declaration, or simply a symbolic stance."

Rather, it will represent a qualitative transformation in advocating for girls' education-bringing prosperity to every deprived girl and to every community in dire need of the contributions of both its sons and daughters equally."

## Trump calls California leaders 'incompetent'

LOS ANGELES, United States (AFP): US President-elect Donald Trump accused California officials on Sunday of incompetence over their handling of deadly wildfires raging around Los Angeles.

"The fires are still raging in L.A. The incompetent pols (politicians) have no idea how to put them out," Trump said on his Truth Social platform.

"This is one of the worst catastrophes in the history of our Country. They just can't put out the fires. What's wrong with them?" he wrote.

The speed and intensity of the blazes ravaging Los Angeles have tested its

firefighting infrastructure and given rise to questions and criticism about the state's preparedness.

Hydrants ran dry in the Pacific Palisades neighborhood as it was ravaged by one of the region's five separate fires, while water shortages additionally hampered efforts elsewhere.

With just over a week before he returns to the White House, Trump has launched a series of evidence-free broadsides accusing California's Democratic Governor Gavin Newsom of failings in response to the blazes.

Newsom has meanwhile invited Trump to visit Los Angeles and sur-

vey the devastation with him.

The fires have so far killed at least 16 people, displaced 150,000 more, and destroyed more than 12,000 structures according to state officials.

"Thousands of magnificent houses are gone, and many more will soon be lost. There is death all over the place," Trump said in his post.

Despite firefighters' heroic efforts, including precision sorties from aerial crews, the Palisades Fire has continued to push east toward the priceless collections of the Getty Center art museum and north to the densely populated San Fernando Valley.

## 15 killed in an explosion and fire at a gas station in central Yemen

CAIRO (AP): An explosion at a gas station triggered a massive fire in central Yemen, killing at least 15 people, health officials said Sunday.

The explosion occurred Saturday at the Zaher district in the province of Bayda, the Houthi-run Health Ministry said in a statement. At least 67 others were injured, including 40 in critical condition.

The ministry said rescue teams were searching for those reported missing. It wasn't immediately clear what caused the explosion.

Footage circulated online showing a massive fire that sent columns of smoke into the sky and left vehicles charred and burning.

Bayda is controlled by the Houthis, who have been at war with Yemen's internationally recognized government for more than a decade.

Elsewhere in Bayda, the Houthis attacked and looted Hanaka Al-Masoud village in the Al-Qurayshiya district last week, according to the internationally recognized government. It said there were fatalities but gave no figures.

Information Minister Moammar Al-Eryani said the attack came after a weeklong siege of the village.

"This horrific attack targeted citizens' homes and mosques, and resulted in many casualties, including women and children, and the destruction of property," he said.

Rights activist Riyadh Al-Dubai said the Houthis detained dozens of men and looted homes, seizing valuables such as gold, money, daggers and other possessions. He said shelling by the Houthis had continued relentlessly day and night for more than five days.

The US Embassy in Yemen condemned the attack, saying in a statement that the "deaths, injuries, and wrongful detentions of innocent Yemenis perpetrated by Houthi terrorists are depriving the Yemeni people of peace and a brighter future."

Yemen's civil war began in 2014, when the Houthis took control of the capital, Sanaa, and much of the country's north, forcing the government to flee to the south, then to Saudi Arabia.

The war has killed more than 150,000 people including civilians and combatants, and in recent years deteriorated largely into a stalemate and caused one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

## South Korea's Yoon will not attend first impeachment hearing

SEOUL (AFP): South Korea's suspended President Yoon Suk Yeol will not attend the first hearing of his impeachment trial next week because of safety concerns, his lawyer said on Sunday.

Yoon has been holed up in the presidential residence and protected by an elite guard force since being suspended and impeached last month, following a short-lived declaration of martial law that plunged the country into political chaos.

He has refused to meet prosecutors and investigators and his presidential guard unit thwarted an attempt to arrest him following a tense, hours-long standoff earlier this month.

The Constitutional Court has scheduled five trial dates spanning January 14 to February 4, which will proceed in his absence if he does not attend.

"Concerns about safety and potential incidents have arisen. Therefore, the President will not be able to attend the trial on January 14," lawyer Yoon Kab-keun said in a statement sent to

AFP.

"The President is willing to appear at any time once safety issues are resolved."

The court will decide whether to uphold his impeachment or restore him to office.

Separately, investigators seeking to question Yoon on insurrection charges linked to his ill-fated martial law declaration are preparing another arrest attempt.

His lawyers have repeatedly said an initial seven-day warrant and the new one they secured this week were both "unlawful".

Investigators have kept secret the length of the new warrant, with local media reports saying it is longer than the previous seven days.

Rival protesters for and against Yoon have gathered almost daily in the South Korean capital since the crisis unfolded.

On Sunday more demonstrations were planned by rival camps outside Yoon's residence and on the streets of Seoul — either calling for his impeachment to be

declared invalid or for him to be detained immediately.

The president's legal team say his guards remain on "high alert".

Yoon would become the first sitting South Korean president to be arrested if investigators are able to detain him.

If convicted, he faces prison or even the death penalty.

A team of Corruption Investigation Office (CIO) officials and police are planning for the next attempt, which they said could be their last.

The CIO said anyone obstructing their attempt could be detained themselves and police reportedly held a meeting of top commanders on Friday to plan for the renewed effort.

Former Presidential Security Service (PSS) chief Park Chong-jun — who resigned on Friday and was automatically replaced by a more hardline Yoon loyalist — told reporters there must be no bloodshed in any second arrest attempt.

He faced two days of

questioning and did not explain his resignation.

"I am cooperating as diligently as possible with the authorities' investigation," he told reporters Saturday.

His replacement, acting PSS chief Kim Seong-hun, refused to turn up to a third summons on Saturday claiming he had to protect Yoon, opening him up to possible arrest.

Lee Jin-ha, head of the service's security and safety division, was questioned on Saturday.

The National Office of Investigation, a police unit, sent a note to high-ranking police officials in Seoul requesting they prepare to mobilise 1,000 investigators for the fresh attempt, the Yonhap news agency reported.

As the crisis goes on Yoon's ruling party has seen a bump in approval ratings.

A Gallup survey published Friday showed the People Power Party's approval rating had risen to 34 percent from 24 percent three weeks ago.

## Lebanese whose homes were destroyed in the war want to rebuild

BEIRUT (AP): Six weeks into a ceasefire that halted the war between Israel and Hezbollah, many displaced Lebanese whose homes were destroyed in the fighting want to rebuild — but reconstruction and compensation are slow in coming.

Large swaths of southern and eastern Lebanon, as well as Beirut's southern suburbs, lie in ruins, tens of thousands of houses reduced to rubble in Israeli airstrikes. The World Bank estimated in a report in November — before the ceasefire later that month — that losses to Lebanon's infrastructure amount to some \$3.4 billion.

In the south, residents of dozens of villages along the Lebanon-Israel border can't go back because Israeli soldiers are still there. Under the U.S.-negotiated ceasefire deal, Israeli forces are supposed to withdraw by Jan. 26 but there are doubts they will.

Other terms of the deal are also uncertain — after Hezbollah's withdrawal, the Lebanese army is to step in and dismantle the militants' combat positions in the south. Israeli officials have complained the Lebanese troops are not moving in fast enough — to which they say the Israeli troops need to get out first.

Reconstruction prospects — and who will foot the bill — remain unclear.

In 2006, after the month-long Israel-Hezbollah war, Hezbollah financed much of the \$2.8 billion reconstruction with ally Iran's

support.

The Lebanese militant group has said it would do so again and has begun making some payments. But Hezbollah, which is also a powerful political party, has suffered significant losses in this latest war and for its part, Iran is now mired in a crippling economic crisis.

The cash-strapped and long paralyzed Lebanese government is in little position to help and international donors may be stretched by the post-war needs in the Gaza Strip and neighboring Syria.

Many Lebanese say they are waiting for Hezbollah's promised compensation. Others say they received some money from the group — much less than the cost of the damage to their homes. Manal, a 53-year-old mother of four from the southern village of Marjayoun has been displaced with her family for over a year, since Hezbollah began firing rockets into Israel on Oct. 8, 2023, in support of its ally Hamas in Gaza.

Israel responded with shelling and airstrikes in southern Lebanon. In July, Manal's family heard that their home was destroyed. The family has now sought compensation from Hezbollah.

"We haven't received any money yet," said Manal, giving only her first name for fear of reprisals. "Maybe our turn hasn't arrived."

On a recent day in southern Beirut, where airstrikes had hit just 100 meters (yards) away from his home, Mohammad watched as an excavator cleared debris, dust swirling in the air.

He said his father went to Hezbollah officials and got \$2,500 — not enough to cover \$4,000 worth of damage to their home.

"Dad took the money and left, thinking it was pointless to argue," said Mohammad, who also gave only his first name for fear of repercussions. He said his uncle was offered only \$194 for a similarly damaged home.

When the uncle complained, Mohammad said, Hezbollah asked him, "We sacrificed our blood, what did you do in the war?"

Others, however, say Hezbollah has compensated them fairly.

Abdallah Skaiki, whose home — also in southern Beirut — was completely destroyed, said he received \$14,000 from Qard Al-Hasan, a Hezbollah-linked microfinance institution.

Hussein Khairredine, director of Jihad Binaa, the construction arm of Hezbollah, said the group is doing as much as it can. Its teams have surveyed over 80% of damaged houses across Lebanon, he said.

"We have begun compensating families," he said. "We have also started providing payments for a year's rent and compensations for furniture."

Khairredin said their

payments include \$8,000 for furniture and \$6,000 for a year's rent for those living in Beirut. Those who are staying elsewhere get \$4,000 in money for rent.

Blueprints for each house are being prepared, he said, declining to elaborate on reconstruction plans.

"We are not waiting for the government," he added. "But of course, we urge the state to act."

There is little the government can do.

The World Bank's report from mid-November said Lebanon's infrastructure and economic losses from the war amount to \$8.5 billion. And that estimate doesn't take into account the last month of the war, Deputy Prime Minister Saadi Chami told The Associated Press.

"The government does not have the financial resources for reconstruction," he said bluntly.

The World Bank said 99,209 housing units were damaged — and 18% of them were completely destroyed.

In southern Beirut suburbs alone, satellite analysis by Lebanon's National Center for Natural Hazards and Early Warning identified 353 buildings completely destroyed and over 6,000 homes damaged.

Lebanese officials have appealed to the international community for funding. The government is working with the World Bank to get an updated damage assessment and hopes to set up a multi-donor trust fund.



KARACHI: A large number of Participants, including women and children, to express solidarity and raise slogans in support of Palestinians during the Gaza Million March at Sea View.